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HINTS
FOR HAPPY HOURS;

OR,

AMUSEMENTS FOR ALL AGES.



LONDON :
J. AND C. MOZLEY, PATERNOSTER ROW ;
AND JOSEPH MASTERS, NEW BOND STREET.
1850.

TO
HER GRACE THE DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND,
(IN ACCORDANCE WITH HER KIND PERMISSION)
THIS EFFORT TO COMBINE
AMUSEMENT
WITH THE EXERCISE OF THOUGHT
AND IMAGINATION,
IS MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED, BY
HER GRACE'S
OBLIGED AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,
HARRIET ELIZABETH FOURDRINIER.

PREFACE.

WHEN a large party of people of various ages are domesticated together in a country house, it is sometimes rather a difficult task to devise evening entertainments, in which the juniors of a family may join with as much ease and satisfaction as their elders.

To supply this want has been the aim of the present little volume, in which it has been attempted to unite the interest of a narrative to the suggestions for varied amusements, and to show in a familiar style how easily and successfully a large circle may be happily employed and entertained.

Northwood, Staffordshire,

Nov. 1850.

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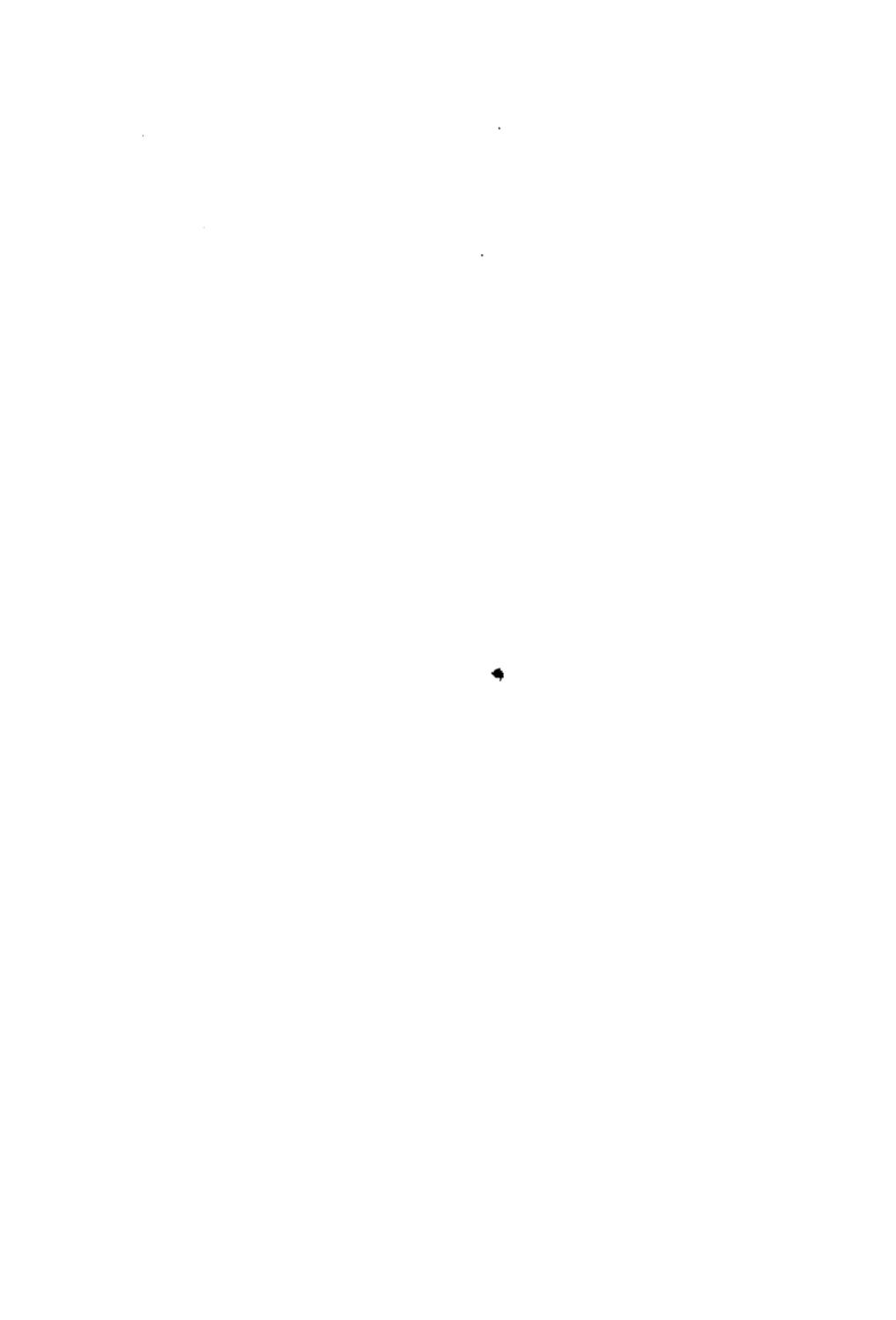
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HINTS FOR HAPPY HOURS;

OR

AMUSEMENTS FOR ALL AGES.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAITLANDS AT HOME.—THE REQUEST GRANTED.—THE
BIRTHDAY.—PLEASING PARADOXES.

ON a winter's evening in the month of December, a family circle were assembled in a warm, well-lighted room, whose cheerful aspect and genial atmosphere afforded a delightful contrast to the darkness and cold which reigned without.

Mr. Maitland, the father of the family, was comfortably ensconced in an arm-chair with his usual reading lamp, and a favourite volume; but he was perfectly alive to what was passing around him, and now and then threw in an *apropos* word or jest. Mrs. Maitland, seated opposite to him, was engaged in the mysteries of *Crotchet*, and the children, six in number, varying in age from seventeen to five years, were luxuriating in various attitudes and amusements round the table drawn before the cheerful Christmas fire. Agnes, the second daughter, after holding a

whispered, but animated colloquy with her next brother Tom, came up to her mother with a very beseeching look, and said,

“ Dear mamma, you are always so kind, that we want you now, to do us a very great favour indeed.”

“ Well, my dear,” replied Mrs. Maitland, “ let me hear what the favour is, and then I shall know whether I can grant it.”

“ Why, mamma, you know that you have kindly invited a party for to-morrow night, to celebrate Richard’s birthday ; and we want you to tell us some new game to play at. We shall get tired of dancing ; we have played at ‘ How, when, and where,’ until we have no new words left. We always have ‘ crambo verses,’ and ‘ magic music’ at the Smith’s, whilst the Davis’s make us play at that silly nonsense of ‘ I’ve been to Paris,’ or ‘ The horned Lady.’ ”

“ Try proverbs, my dear,” suggested her father, “ they make every body *think*. The questioner should try to put puzzling queries, and the replies should be framed so as to bring in the specified word easily and unnoticed.”

“ Yes, papa, and if every body was as clever as you are at it, it would be very amusing indeed,” said Richard, “ but instead of that, the person who is to guess, generally goes round the circle and asks the questions in a low tone of voice, so that no one hears them but the one addressed, who replies in the same way, consequently, until it comes to one’s own turn, in nine cases out of ten, one might as well be out of the room.”

“ You are about right, my boy,” replied his father, smiling ; “ and even when played at with more animation, there is frequently a difficulty in hiding the *catch* words, generally to be found in a proverb, with-

out a degree of bungling, which draws attention to what the speaker wishes to conceal. I know a lady, who has an idea she could render the game of Proverbs much more intricate and entertaining, by blending several together, both in questions and answers ; but I think every one must be as talented as herself to carry the idea out. And now let us hear whether your mother, out of the storehouse of her imagination, can bring out anything more *generally* available and amusing."

A pause ensued. Mr. Maitland resumed his book, his wife plied her needle with redoubled quickness, whilst her children sat silently, but eagerly watching her countenance. At length the busy needle stopped, its mistress looked up with a bright smile, and said,

" Well, my dear children, I think I have hit upon a new game for you; I shall call it 'Pleasing Paradoxes,' and now I will tell you how to play it ; sit down ; come, papa, lay down your book, you must play. We are each to take a letter of the alphabet in turn, and make a versified paradox upon it. For instance, I take A ; well, now listen :

'It is in an Arch, but not in a Bow,
It is in a Rake, but not in a Hoe.'

Do you understand what I mean ?"

" Not quite, I am afraid, mamma," answered one or two voices.

" Well then, I will try another, B :

'It is in Beast, but not in Cattle,
'Tis not in War, but 'tis in Battle.'

" Oh ! I understand you now, my dear," said her husband, " as a proof whereof I say C :

'It is in Crust, but not in Bread,
It is in Couch, but not in Bed.'

“ Ah ! I see now,” said Tom, in a quick, eager tone—
“ D :

‘It is in Dirt, but not in Mire,
It is in—”

Poor Tom stopped short, and all the youngsters laughed.

“ Hallo ! Tom, my boy,” said his father, “ why, you seem to have *stuck* in the *mire*, but in consideration of your having been the first to try your mother’s new game, I will help you out,” and he finished the line with,

“ It is in Dad, but not in Sire.”

A general laugh followed this sally, and then the young ones set to, in good earnest, and in about half an hour became quite expert in “ Pleasing Paradoxes ;” at the end of which time the game was discontinued, lest they should become tired of it before the arrival of their expected guests the following evening.

About twelve o’clock the next day, great delight was caused at Fernwood, by the arrival of three cousins of the Maitlands from London, who were come to spend a month with them.

After mutual greetings and inquiries had been exchanged, the girls, who were full of the expected juvenile party, told their cousins of it, adding,

“ We are to play at a new game invented by mamma last night, which we think is both pretty and clever.”

“ We shall find plenty for you all to say and do whilst you are with us, my dears,” said Mr. Maitland, “ but now get ready for dinner, for we are very early folks here.”

Mrs. Maitland’s drawing-room, that evening at the appointed hour of assembling, presented a gay and

animated appearance, for when youthful faces are lighted up by the glow of health, and the smiles of good-temper, it is difficult to picture a more pleasing scene than a large and happy party of young people. The joyous group consisted (in addition to their own family) of James, Edward, and Mary Smith ; Eleanor Davis, and her brother Fred ; Margaret and William Pemberton ; and the three London cousins. The two girls, Susan and Jane Harper, were quick, clever, and good-tempered, the very persons for a cheerful Christmas party, whilst their brother John was, to use an expressive phrase, “up to anything,” and was the life and soul of every assemblage of which he formed a part.

With such auxiliaries, the evening amusements of the young people progressed most famously, nothing being dwelt upon long enough to become wearisome.

Mrs. Maitland’s “Pleasing Paradoxes” were so complete a novelty that they obtained great applause, and the first time the circle were seated, the required verses were produced in the following order, each party calling out their “*letter*” as it came to them in alphabetical *routine*.

Mr. Maitland.—A

“It is in an Axe, but not in a Hook,
It is in an Album, but not in a Book.”

Margaret.—B

“It is in Bird, but not in Feather;
It is in Boot, but not in Leather.”

James.—C

“It is in the Cook, but not the Butler,
It is in the Camp, but not the Sutler.”

Agnes.—D

“It is in the Day, but not in the Light,
‘Tis found in the Dark, but not in the Night.”

William.—E

“It is found in an Ensign, but not in a Flag,
Seen twice in a Deer, but not once in a Stag.”

Tom.—F

“Tis in the Foot, but not the Toes,
Tis in the Face, but not the Nose.”

Mrs. Maitland.—G

“It is in Gravel, not in Clay,
It is in Grass, but not in Hay.”

Frederick.—H

“Tis found in the Hat, but not in the crown,
Tis in the Harlequin, not in the clown.”

Jane.—I

“Tis found in Inns, but not in Taverns,
In Iron mines, but not in Caverns.”

John.—J

“It is always in Joke, but never in Fun,
Found in a Jest, but not in a Pun.”

Jessie.—K

“In a Knot, but not a Bow,
Joins the Quick, but not the Slow.”

Edward.—L

“It is in Lad, but not in Boy,
It is in Gladness, not in Joy.”

Eleanor.—M

“Tis always in Mischief, yet joins not in Hurt,
Is found in the Mud, but not in the Dirt.”

Susan.—N

“It is in a Nut, but not in the Shell,
Seen in the Knocker, but not in the Bell.”

Richard.—O

“It is in Ore, but not in metal,
It is in Pot, but not in Kettle.”

Mary.—P

“It is in Port, but not in Sherry,
‘Tis not in Mead, but ‘tis in Perry.”

Margaret.—Q

“It is in Quince, but not in Apple,
In the Quaker, not his Chapel.”

Mr. Maitland.—R

“It is in Rock, but not in Stone,
It is in Gristle, not in Bone.”

Agnes.—S

“It is in Soap, but not in Water,
It is in Son, but not in Daughter.”

William.—T

“It is in Tea, but not in Milk,
It is in Thread, but not in Silk.”

Tom.—U

“It is in Urn, but not in Heater,
It is in Paul, but not in Peter.”

Mrs. Maitland.—V

“It is in Vice, but not in Crime,
It is in Verse, but not in Rhyme.”

Frederick.—W

“It is in Wine, but not in Liquor,
Though not in Cane, it is in Wicker.”

John.—X

“It is in the Text, but not in the Sermon,
It is in the Saxon, not in the German.”

Jane.—Y

“It is in Yeast, but not in Barm,
In a Yeoman, not his Farm.”

Jessie.—Z

“It is in Zebra, not in Mule,
In adze, but not in cooper’s tool.”

When the whole of the alphabet had been thus gone through, and every body appeared much pleased with their own, and their neighbour's poetical efforts, a merry dance succeeded, after which supper was announced, at which John proposed his cousin Richard's health, in a very witty but affectionate speech ; and upon the re-assembling of the guests in the drawing-room, he advanced into the middle of the circle, and throwing himself into a theatrical attitude, thus addressed Mrs. Maitland :

“ You've hit, dear Madam, on a plan,
 Which ought to, must, and will, and can,
 Make every little Miss, or Master,
 A Rhymers, or a Poetaster.
 'Twill whet their wits, their mem'ries use,
 And both instruct them and amuse ;
 Nay, e'en to elders of a party,
 'Tis better far than French *ecarte*.
 And won't disgrace upon my troth,
 The ' children of a larger growth.'
 We've pass'd the Alphabet all round,
 And not been very stupid found ;
 But lest our wits get dull, and settle,
 Dear Madam, put us on our mettle.
 Some longer paradoxes then,
 Pass round our joyous group again,
 Make some *good* verses as a sample,
 We'll try to follow the example.”

Much applause followed this clever *impromptu*, and in cheerful compliance with the composer's request, Mrs. Maitland recommenced the game, which proceeded thus :

Mrs. Maitland.—A
 “ I'm always used in Artifice,
 Though never in deceit,
 I share in an Acknowledgment,
 But not in a receipt.”

Susan.—B

‘I’m found both in Bed and in Board,
But neither in lodging nor meat,
No Building without me is stored,
Yet I enter not square, lane, nor street.’

Jessie.—C

“I’m in every Colour seen,
Yet not in pink, blue, red, or green,
And though in Checks my form is made,
My figure ne’er appears in plaid.”

William—D

“It in Dread does appear,
But never in fear,
A paradox thus I am giving,
It stands at the head,
And the foot of the Dead,
But never is used by the living.”

Richard.—E

“I’ve a claim upon an Earldom,
But none on rank or station;
And though I’m part of England’s self,
No share have in the nation.”

Eleanor.—F

“It is always in a Fidget,
And always in a Fret;
Yet never in a passion,
Nor even in a pet.”

Mr. Maitland.—G

“In Guilt ’tis found, but not in sin,
In Grief, but not in tears;
In midst of agony ’tis seen,
But ne’er in pain appears.”

James.—H

“It is found in the Husband,
But not in the wife,
It is shown in the character,
Not in the life.”

Jane.—I

“The first of all Inventions,
It has never been in use ;
Not found in Eastern country,
Yet in India, most profuse.”

Margaret.—J

“In the Jews, 'tis accorded a prominent place,
By the Hebrews it never is used ;
In the Jesuits 'tis plain as the nose in the face,
In their College its form is refused.

Frederick.—K

“No Kiss without me e'er is given,
Though both from mouth and lip I'm driven ;
And so I take to Knocks and Kicks,
But yet in squabbles never mix.”

John.—L

“Although I'm constantly in Love,
I've never entered Hymen's band ;
Each lady puts me in her glove,
And yet I never touch her hand.

Mary.—M

“It is always heard in Music,
Yet is never out of tune ;
May can't begin without it,
But 't is never seen in June.”

Edward.—N

“Twice seen in every morning,
Once seen in every Night ;
You'll seek it vainly in the dark,
Nor find it in the light.”

Tom.—O

“It's never out of Order,
But it's always out of place,
It's found in every Opening,
Yet enters not a space.”

Agnes.—P

“Of every Pie and Pudding
I form a useful part,
Yet strange to say, from day to day,
I never touch a tart.”

Mr. Maitland.—Q

“I stay with the Queen, for *entre nous*,
She without me would lose her cue, (Q)
But with the Prince have naught to do ;
Join her Quadrilles, however various,
But neither Polka, nor Cellarius.”

Susan.—R

“Though the leader of a Riot,
And first in every Row ;
To mobs, and their associates,
No assistance 'twill allow.”

Mrs. Maitland.—S

“Though heard distinct in every Sound,
The ear it cannot reach,
'Tis never used by lip or tongue,
Yet always heard in Speech.”

Jessie.—T

“Although in Trade, yet, strange to say,
From shop, and goods it keeps away ;
In midst of every city seen,
And yet in London has not been.”

William.—U

“'Tis found in Units, not in tens,
'Tis seen in quills, but not in pens.”

Richard.—V

“'Tis found in all the Virtuous,
But shuns the wise, and good ;
'Tis mix'd with each one's Victuals,
But not in daily food.”

John.—W

“ Although a part of Wedlock,
Has nought to do with marriage,
Is seen in Women walking,
But never in a carriage.”

Mary.—X

“ I lent to Xerxes double aid,
Yet entered not the Persian host ;
And 'though in Xenophon display'd,
No author can my presence boast.”

Jane—Y

“ Although in Youth pre-eminent,
And seen in midst of boyhood's race ;
With middle life 'tis never blent,
Nor leaves on age a single trace.”

James.—Z

“ Foremost in every Zealot,
In enthusiasts never seen,
Dwells in the midst of Switzerland,
In the Alps has never been.”

“ Really, my dear,” said Mr. Maitland, when the game was ended, “ I am quite surprised, as well as pleased, at the success which has attended the first trial of your new game. We have all been inspired with a portion of the wit and imagination which originated the thought, and I beg to propose a vote of thanks from the whole party.” Great clapping of hands, and *miniature* cheers followed this speech, to which Mrs. Maitland returned gentle smiles, and thanks of modest gratification, and this formed the concluding event of the evening. Pleasure as well as pain has its termination. Servants were announced as having been for some time awaiting their young masters and mistresses. Cheeks began to look pale, and eyes to wax dim and sleepy. Mr. and Mrs. Maitland thought it would neither be wise nor proper longer to detain them,

and so kind adieu, and grateful thanks were exchanged, and the youthful guests were just passing from the room, when once more the never-to-be tired-out John Harper burst forth into an *extempore* effusion, and thus dismissed the party :

“ Pleasant dreams to you all when you go to your beds,
But don’t let this evening go out of your heads ;
Play the game as we’ve played it, ‘tis sure to amuse,
And no one to join it, will crossly refuse ;
And whilst you are playing, claim forfeits or fines,
From those who produce not the requisite lines.
Or if children are stupid, or elders are humdrums,
Ask the rhymes as Charades or poetic Conundrums.”

CHAPTER II.

THE SKATING PARTY.—AN ACCIDENT.—TING TANG.—CONVERSATION CARDS.—THE GAME CRITICISED.

THE morning after this juvenile *fête*, the amusements of the previous evening, of course, formed a topic of conversation at the breakfast table, and the young people were unanimous in their delight and applause at their mother’s new game.

“ Your mamma’s example has inspired more than one person ;” said Mr. Maitland. “ I know one, *rather intimately*, who has had an ‘idea,’ during the night, which may perhaps be worked out some other evening when we want a little variety.”

“ Oh ! how delightful,” cried Jane Harper, “ will you tell us to-night, uncle ?”

“ We shall see when the evening comes,” answered he, “ perhaps by that time you may all be too tired,

for I am going to challenge you to walk over to Burton Craigs, and have a slide and a skate on the lake there."

"Shall you go, dear aunt?" asked John, "if so, count on me, as your most obedient slave and black-amoor."

"I shall not put your professions to the test," she replied, "having an engagement at home; but if you will take care of Alice, I shall say you are a very kind cousin, and she will no doubt reward you by being very well-behaved."

"Oh! yes, cousin John, I will be very good," said little Alice, "but I shall pelt you with snow-balls, and so will Charley, for it is *such* fun."

The walking party were soon equipped, and sallied forth into the keen frosty air, with light hearts and active limbs, the sun shining clear and bright, and giving a thousand brilliant hues to the hoar frost, which hung thick upon the leafless branches of the trees. Their road lay through fields and lanes, the hedges of which boasted in summer a luxuriance of wild roses and hawthorn blossom, now their sprays were gay with the hips and haws, and the holly-berries shone bright and cheerful amongst the dark green leaves. The Londoners were perhaps more delighted with the wild beauty around them than those who had lived amongst it all their lives.

"Look, Jessie," cried Susan, "did you ever see anything so perfectly beautiful as the effect of that tree, laden with its glittering wreaths, against the pure blue sky! What tree do you call it?"

"Hush! my dear sister," interposed John, "without being aware of it, you are recalling unpleasant reminiscences to your male companions; that tree, so lovely to look at, is most painful to *feel*; those

pendant branches, now so gracefully inclining their gem-decked heads, do sometimes take a *descending* form less pleasing to the spectator. That tree, my sister, is the pride of the painter, the sceptre of the pedagogue, and the dread of the pupil ! in one word it is a—*Birch*."

"But now for your promised game of snow-balls, Alice," and setting the example by collecting a large handful of the spotless snow, they were all soon engaged in a mimic warfare, which gave a glow to their cheeks, and a warmth to their limbs, particularly grateful on so cold a day. A merry chase of the flying girls brought them to Burton Lake, a fine sheet of water at the foot of some beautiful rocks, a famous place for summer pic-nics, or winter skating parties.

Mr. Maitland was a truly elegant skater, and his sons bid fair to emulate his fame. The country girls could slide very well ; and after much persuasion, Jane and Susan ventured on the ice, holding by their cousin's hands ; but to do more than merely *stand* upon its slippery surface was, to them, impossible. The first attempt at a move, down they came, to the great amusement of all ; their own laughter being as loud as that of the spectators of their fall.

The prudent Jessie soon after proclaimed it time to go home, "or mamma would be afraid that some accident had happened."

"One quadrille, uncle," suggested John, "and then we will obey our liege lady. You shall be *my* partner Tom—come, *chaine Anglaise*, bravo ! now *balancez*—capital ! *chaine des dames*," and making an additional *strike*, he lost his balance, and measured his length at his partner's feet.

"*Cavalier seul*," laughed Mr. Maitland, and the whole party echoed the jest, and joined in the mirth.

"Being his *last* appearance in that character," cried John, as he rose, and limped to the bank of the lake, where his pale face and compressed lips soon changed laughter into commiseration; for he was obliged to confess that he was "in great pain, and that he feared he had sprained his ankle."

"Why, my poor lad, this is a sad mishap," said Mr. Maitland; "let Richard take off your skates—there, now take my arm, and try if you can get to old Dawson's cottage; we may perhaps procure something there to bathe your ankle with."

"No, no, papa," cried Jessie, "let us get John home, as soon as possible, I am sure that mamma will not be satisfied until Mr. Barnes is sent for."

"Oh, papa," said Tom, "you and Dick carry John to Dawson's cottage, and I will run forward, and borrow his donkey, which John can ride home."

In accordance with this thoughtful plan, the party set off, Alice and Charley both crying at the misfortune which had befallen their playfellow. Old Dawson willingly permitted the eager request of Tom, and John was lifted very gently by his kind attendants upon the donkey's back, and, although evidently suffering much pain, contrived to make his young companions frequently smile, at his witty and cheerful remarks.

Mr. Maitland undertook to walk on with the two youngest children, and prepare his wife for the arrival of her disabled nephew; consequently all needful attendance was given very shortly after, as Mr. Barnes lived very near, and was fortunately at home when summoned. Upon examining John's ankle, he relieved Mrs. Maitland's fears of a fracture, by the assurance that it was nothing more than a violent sprain, which would only require nursing and rest, to make it very soon well.

It was with a rueful face that John received the intelligence that he would probably have to remain quietly on the sofa for the next week or more.

"Now that is what I call pleasant," said he, with a grimace. "I came down from London on purpose to enjoy the out-door sports of the country, and all from my over anxiety to do the graceful in the eyes of my fair cousins, I am obliged to forego any future prospects of being useful as a lady's companion."

"You must be doubly agreeable within doors, my dear boy," said his aunt; "we will all assist to render your confinement as little irksome as possible. Mr. Barnes has promised to come to tea this evening, and bring a young Edinburgh friend with him."

"The more the merrier," remarked her husband.

A few hours after this conversation the happy party were again assembled round the drawing-room fire, and John comfortably installed on the sofa. Mr. Barnes was a cheerful companion, and had long been intimate with the family; and young Cameron was a clever and lively addition to their circle.

When the tea-things were removed, Mr. Maitland said, "Now then, my friends, I will tell you the '*idea*' which arose in my dreamy state last night, after I was in bed. Your mother's 'paradoxes' were still running in my head, and I was endeavouring to make one or two fresh ones. I wanted a rhyme for *man*; and I murmured over the words, '*ban, clan, Dan, fan, Nan*,' &c., until I became quite amused at the number of rhyming terminations; this set me '*a thinking*', and in a short time I arranged a game in my own mind, of which we will now have a trial. I shall *think* of a word, and tell you what it *rhymes* with, you must try to find out what the word is, and *define* it in your answer, or guess, but not tell me what word *you* think

of, thus it will be a mutual puzzle. You all look very much amazed, but an example will soon enlighten you. Now I have thought of a word, and it rhymes with *at* ; if you, Mr. Barnes, want to ask me if it is ‘*cat*,’ say something to this effect: ‘Is it an useful domestic animal?’ to which, if you have not guessed right, I shall answer ‘no, it is not a *cat*;’ then we will suppose Jessie follows with—‘Is it what the cat would very willingly catch and eat?’ to which I should reply, ‘no, it is not a *rat*,’ and so on, until by the questioner having really hit upon the word I thought of, I am compelled by verity to answer, ‘yes, it is *that*.’”

“I think we begin to understand your meaning now,” said Mr. Barnes.

“Yes,” said John; “please uncle to ‘go ahead,’ and try what sort of a band we can muster at your new game of what d’ye call it?”

“I think I will name it ‘*Ting tang*,’ because of its *chiming* so well together,” replied his uncle; “I shall confine myself at present to words of one syllable, and have now thought of one which rhymes with *air*.”

Mrs. M. “Are all men subject to it?”

Mr. M. “Too surely so to what you think of, but it is not—*care*.”

Jane. “Is it the dwelling of a wild beast?”

Mr. M. “No, it is not *lair*.”

Mr. Barnes. “Is it what a bachelor’s establishment is frequently deficient in?”

Mr. M. “Do you mean a *chair*?”

Mr. B. “No : I mean when the bachelor gives a dinner party of more than six.”

Mr. M. “Oh ! then I reply it is not *ware*.”

Susan. “Is it what country folks do in London?”

Mr. M. “No, Miss *Quiz*, it is not *stare*.”

Young Cameron. “A classical description of a peculiar kind of *cygnet*?”

Mr. M. “*Signet-seal*, what is this? Oh! notwithstanding your *double entendre*, I must say my word is *not* like a *black swan, rare*.”

Richard. “Is it what I should like to be to old Mr. Green, the banker?”

Mr. M. “I should not object myself, but neither you nor my thought will be the *heir*.”

Tom. “Is it something brown and old I should like to mount at the Grange?”

Mr. M. “Now, Tom, you have puzzled me, I hardly know whether you mean the old brown *stair*, or the old brown *mare*.”

Tom. “The old *mare*, papa.”

Mr. M. “Then 'tis not that, I do declare.”

Agnes. “Is it what I do to my clothes?”

Mr. M. “No, my dear, it is not *tear*.”

Agnes. “Now, papa, that's too bad; I meant *wear*.”

John. “Would my father have been one had he been a Frenchman?”

Mr. M. “*Votre serviteur Monsieur*, *he* would, and *it* would not—he would have been a father; but this is not *un père*.”

Jessie. “Is it what I do not consider that last question?”

Mr. M. “Another contradiction! I agree with *you*, Jessie, and yet I must own—it is *fair*.”

“I think this is a very amusing game, uncle,” said Susan, “and may be made useful in future to us in playing ‘Paradoxes;’ it will give us such a facility in finding rhymes.”

“I agree with *you*, my dear,” said her aunt, “but now let us have another round of ‘Ting tang.’”

“Stop one moment, my dear,” said her husband, “I

really think the little ones can play at this game; "come here my pet," he continued, calling Alice from the table, where she and Charley had got a book of prints before them; "now listen to what is going on, and you will be able to give an answer with the best of us, I am sure."

Mrs. M. "I give a word which rhymes with *dale*."

Jessie. "Is it what a lady becomes when agitated?"

Mrs. M. "No, it is not *pale*."

Mr. Barnes. "Is it a part of an ancient knight's accoutrements?"

John. "There, aunt, he wants to put you to the proof."

Mrs. M. "So I perceive, John, but it is not *mail*."

Susan. "Is it like old news?"

Mrs. M. "Do you think it likely I should choose for a new game that which is *stale*?"

Mr. M. "Is it what Hamlet told Polonius he agreed the cloud was like?"

Mrs. M. "It *is* very like, but not a *whale*."

Agnes. "Can I find it at the foot of a hill?"

Mrs. M. "You might, but it is not a *vale*."

Jane. "Is it that thoughtful creature which always carries its own habitation with it?"

Mrs. M. "You are very quick, my dear, and therefore neither you nor my thought can be considered a *snail*."

Tom. "Is it what I like to hit right well?"

Mrs. M. "No, it is not a *nail*."

Charley. "Is it what pigs carry behind them?"

Mrs. M. "No, my darling, it is not a *tail*."

Alice. "Is it what the milkmaids use?"

Mrs. M. "No, my sweet one, not a *pail*."

John. "Is it what I am very fond of?"

Mrs. M. "Nay, that's too general a question, you

like a *sail*, and you like a *tale*, what do you mean ? I give that up."

John. "I plead guilty, aunt, to liking *ale*."

Mrs. M. "No, then, it is not *ale*."

Cameron. "I think it is what I should do in guessing other people's meanings."

Mrs. M. "You have done so *now*, for it certainly is not *fail*."

Richard. "Was there any last week ?"

Mrs. M. "A great quantity, but it is not *hail*."

Jessie. "Now, mamma, it has been all round, and we have not guessed it ; will you tell us ?"

Mrs. M. "Oh ! proceed ; there are many more words yet, you have not mentioned."

Jessie. "Well, then, should I do it under your anger ?"

Mrs. M. "I cannot tell what would occur in such a very unusual circumstance, but you cannot make my *word—quail*."

Mr. Barnes. "Oh, skip me if you please, I can't think of one."

Susan. "I wonder, aunt, you do not *do* it at Mr. Barnes for his missing his turn."

Mrs. M. "It would be so rude, my dear, to a guest ; not even in *thought* have I given way to *rail*."

Mr. M. "Is it what I wish Barnes would take off my tooth ?"

Mrs. M. "Poor papa ! I wish you could say as truly as I can, it is not *scale*."

The game had proceeded in this lively uninterrupted manner to this period, when the servant entered with a note, which he delivered to Mr. Barnes.

"One of the frequent annoyances of a country doctor's life," he exclaimed, after reading it, "an old man at Crompton has been taken suddenly ill, and as

his son has walked the three miles to fetch me, I must of course accompany him back."

" You shall have the pony to go on," said Mr. Maitland.

" Well, let us try to find out this 'ting tang' before you go," said John.

" Will Mr. Barnes have to ride through it to-night, dear aunt ?"

Mrs. M. " With the wind blowing so loud, it seems almost untrue to say it is not a *gale*."

" The pony is ready, sir," said Peter at this moment.

" Heigho !" said Mr. Barnes, rising reluctantly from his chair, " the thought of leaving this cheerful party almost makes me ready to do, what I now ask, dear Madam, if your word is ?"

Mrs. M. " I am sorry that our pleasant party must be broken up for the present, and *truth*, as well as politeness, makes me both echo and acknowledge your *wail*."

" Now girls, give us a little music to fill up the time of our friend's absence," said Mr. Maitland.

The piano was accordingly opened, and sweet sounds floated through the room to the gratification of all.

Jessie then produced some conversation cards, which amused the group by their odd replies ; and at the end of which game, Mr. Maitland exclaimed, " Why, I declare if here is not our worthy doctor back again. You are welcome, my good friend, although I should think my old pony has smarted for your quick return."

" Indeed, my dear sir, I have been gone an hour and a half," said Mr. Barnes, in a deprecating tone, " and it has seemed much longer to me. Well, have you had any more 'ting tang' in my absence ?"

"No," replied Mrs. Maitland; "and my husband even forbid our making any observations upon the game, until you rejoined the party."

"Thank you, my good sir ; I have thought it over during my ride, and give *my* opinion that it is very amusing, for there were some capital definitions in each round. I only wonder how either you or Mrs. Maitland comprehended the meaning of some."

"They have caught the *spirit* of my idea famously," remarked the former, "it makes it all the more amusing to give far-fetched definitions, and to vary the style of the reply ; and at any time it might be converted into a game of forfeits. If the proposer of the original word owns to being unable to find out the meaning of a questioner's definition, he should pay a forfeit for such inability ; or if the circle acknowledge that they cannot think of any more rhymes, and the word is still unguessed, they should be fined *all round*, and the querist should recommence the game, after telling what his *first* thought was."

"Yes, I think it might be made optional for forfeits, as John suggested it should be in my 'paradoxes,'" remarked Mrs. Maitland. "Come to us on Friday evening," she added to the doctor and his friend, "and we will try this game of mine. You will meet our new curate and his sister."

CHAPTER III.

THE HAPPY INVALID.—ORIGINAL CONUNDRUMS.—INVITATION TO THE GRANGE.—THE SCRAP BOOK.—THE CARDINAL'S LETTER.

JOHN Harper was too clever, as well as good-tempered, to allow the confinement to which he was obliged now to submit, to deprive either himself or his kind entertainers of pleasure and amusement. He was very fond of reading aloud, and his uncle's well-stored library soon furnished a volume with which he wiled away the hours, to the gratification of his aunt and female cousins, who good-naturedly would not leave the disabled youth alone. When dinner-time approached, Mr. Maitland and the boys returned from a walk they had taken to see a poor sick man at some distance, and brought rather improved accounts of his health.

“How is our invalid?” asked Mr. Maitland.

“Nay, uncle, do not call me an invalid,” said John; “except this tiresome sprain I feel quite well, and have enjoyed my morning’s occupation exceedingly, and shall be almost sorry when my uncle is sufficiently strong to allow of no excuse for such a luxurious existence—smiled on and waited on by kind dame and fair damsels; who *could* wish to be *well* and give up such enjoyments? I have no doubt I shall make one or two splendid conundrums too, now I have so much leisure.”

“John’s conundrums and charades are always very ridiculous,” said his sister Jane, “but the best of them is they are original; I have a few in my letter-case up stairs, which I will bring down this evening.”

The evening's amusements were again of a varied nature,—music, both vocal and instrumental, forming a large portion of it.

"Uncle," said John, "do you know what *musick* would do to you, if by chance you dropped the first letter? why, make *you sick* (*usick*), to be sure!"

"Very old, and very bad," said Mr. Maitland; "so instead of wasting your precious breath, take a part with your sisters in my favourite glee of 'the Chough and Crow.' Jane flatters you by saying you sing bass very well."

"*All I sing is base,*" replied the incorrigible John; "but give me the song and I will do my best."

During the cheerful supper Jane produced her promised conundrums, and much mirth was created in guessing the following:

"In what did Queen Elizabeth always take her pills?"

"In jelly;" "In wine," said one or two.

"Oh, no," said Mr. Maitland, "nothing so common, perhaps she took them 'in a trice.'"

"No," said Jane, "she took them *in cider* (*inside* her)."

"Why are ladies like Churches?"

"Something about *belles* and ringing, I dare say," said Richard.

"Because there is no *living* without them."

"How exceedingly gallant, John," said his aunt, smiling; "we shall redouble our attentions to you henceforth. Go on, Jane."

"Why is love like a potatoe?"

"Oh! that's old," said Tom, "because it shoots from the eyes."

"Oh, dear no," said Jane, looking at her list, "nothing half so flattering. Because it becomes less by *paring*."

"What a falling off was there!" laughed Mr. Maitland, "after the previous one!"

"The next is a sort of *neutral*," continued Jane.

"Why is love like a box of lucifers!"

"Ah! I think I have it," said her uncle. "Because it produces many matches."

"Yes, that is right. Now Tom, as you are rather apt to climb up trees, and scramble about now and then, suppose you knocked your head by accident, what would be the best game for you to play at, to alleviate the pain?"

"Oh! a good game at cricket," said Tom, eagerly; "I should soon forget a knock on the head."

"Do not you think, uncle, it would be better for him to have '*a friendly rubber?*'"

"Very good!" answered her uncle, "have you any more of John's *good-uns* there?"

"Yes; three more: If a man were to bite off another man's nose, what is he bound by the law to do?"

"Oh! we can't guess that, Jane, I'm sure," said Jessie, "so we'll give it up."

"Why, he is bound to '*keep the peace*,' to be sure!"

"How very ridiculous; are the other two as much so?" said Jessie, "if so, give the answers at once, when you have asked them."

"Why is a chimney-sweeper less difficult to be pleased by his tailor than any other man?"

"I should never have thought he employed a tailor," said Richard; "pray tell us."

"Because his clothes always *soot* him."

"That's not bad," said Mr. Maitland; "now, Jenny, what is your last; is it the best?"

"No, uncle, I think not, but you shall judge. What is the difference between an emperor and a beggar boy?"

"I have heard an old song in my younger days," said Mr. Maitland, laughing, "about the

—'difference between
A beggar and a queen,'

but I hope the distinctions in *this* case are more politely and delicately defined."

"Oh! quite in keeping with imperial dignity, I assure you; but, John, you manage the pronunciation better than I do."

"Well," said John, "the difference is this: One issues manifestoes, and the other *manifests toes without 'is' shoes.*"

"I'll tell you a conundrum that was made the other day by a young friend of mine in London," said Susan. "What are the only two quadrupeds admitted into the opera?"

"Nay, we know so little about the opera," said Richard; "pray tell us."

"*Puppies* and *white kids*," replied his cousin, archly.

"We owe you one for that, 'saucy Sukey,'" said her uncle, "and some other evening you shall have 'a Rowland for your Oliver.'"

A sudden change in the weather prevented the girls from attempting to accompany Mr. Maitland in his proposed walk the next morning. Heavy rain and hail fell in alternate torrents, and gusty storms of wind drove with such pelting force amongst the old trees surrounding the house, that they groaned and cracked in the blast, as if giving audible vent to their aggrieved feelings.

"Oh, what a day to make one value a good *country blaze*," said John, giving the fire a vigorous poke, and then gleefully rubbing his hands before it, spouted

“ ‘Blow winds, and crack your jaws,’ we sit serene ;
For if by angry fate we’re not compelled
To ‘bide the pelting of the pitiless storm,’
Your loud and angry roar will but enhance
The cheering comforts of our English fire !”

“Really, John, you are a second ‘young Roscius,’ ” laughed his uncle ; “and you laud our indoor comforts so truly, and so well, that I do not think I shall desert them myself to-day. I shall go into my study and write some letters.”

As he turned to leave the room, he looked through the window, and observing a groom approaching the house on horseback, he exclaimed, “Who can have sent a servant out in such a miserable day ?”

“Why, it is the Beaumonts’ livery,” replied his wife ; “but I did not know that they had returned from Germany.”

“Oh ! yes, mamma, they have been back in England the last three months,” said Jessie, “but have been in Devonshire, at their uncle, Sir Thomas Graham’s ; and I heard that they were all coming down to the Grange for Christmas.”

A servant here brought in a note for Mrs. Maitland, which he said was to receive an answer by the bearer.

His mistress opened it, and read aloud as follows :

“The Grange, Friday morning.

“My dear Madam,

“I am come back to the Grange, accompanied by my daughter, and her young folks, where I hope they will stay, a few months with me. I wish to make a part, at least, of their visit more agreeable than by the mere society of a solitary old woman, and therefore hope that you and Mr. Maitland will oblige me by coming to us next Tuesday, for some days, accompanied by your four eldest children, and the three young guests I understand you have staying with you. There is plenty of accommodation in the old Grange for you all. The double-

bedded Blue room for the girls ; and the Omnibus, all clean and ready for more boys than you will bring with you ; so I shall take no refusal. A German tree, and some other exotics, are promised as an inducement. With kind regards to all,

“ Believe me, my dear Madam,

“ Very sincerely yours,

“ MARY BEAUMONT.”

When Mrs. Maitland had finished reading the note, the sparkling eyes and glowing cheeks around her, proved that no objection would arise to Mrs. Beaumont’s invitation from the *juniors* of the party ; she therefore applied to her husband for his opinion, and finding that he was willing to oblige his old friend, she wrote a short note of grateful acceptance, with the single proviso that they would “ come if the weather permitted.”

“ O, I am so glad that we are going to the Grange,” said Agnes, dancing about the room, and clapping her hands, “ it is the dearest, funniest old place in the world—such ‘ dark closets and steep staircases ; ’ such ‘ large old window-seats and deep dark corners ; ’ such queer ins and outs, and ‘ long winding passages : ’ it always puts me in mind of a story-book whenever I go there, and I go about expecting to meet some old fairy with a wand in the day-time, or to see a ghost at night ! ”

“ Rather a pleasant abode, I should think,” said John ; “ and your bedroom seems especially suited to your romantic taste, by its fear-inspiring name. ‘ The Blue chamber !!! ’ ‘ O, *ow orrid!* ’ as my friend Joe Parkins would say. I wonder you do not all expect to be frightened to death by the ghost of some love-lorn maiden, or else *less romantically*, murdered in your sleep.”

“ It must be the ghost of a very *bold* maiden, or else

a very daring *living* body, that would stand the chance of being attacked by four young ladies, all armed with teeth, nails, and tongues," said Mr. Maitland, jokingly ; " but I must make good my own retreat, I see, or shall have them beginning to practice on *me*, to be ready for the 'ghost of the Grange,'" and so saying he left the room.

" What is Mrs. Beaumont's '*Omnibus*,' where we lads are to sleep ?" asked John. " I hope she has neither 'steady horses' nor 'careful drivers' attached to it, or we shall perhaps be dragged

" Through bush and through briar,
Through mud and through mire."

" You will see in due time, John," replied his aunt ; " I shall not enlighten you as to any of the comforts or discomforts of the house we are invited to, but I do not think you will regret going."

" Is George at school now, mamma ?" asked Jessie.

" He was at Bohn University," replied Mrs. Maitland, " which was the principal reason for his mother also living abroad. Her two daughters she has always kept at home, under the careful superintendence of Miss Chapman, a very superior woman, whom I have known for years."

Peter at this moment entered with another note, and observed that " no answer was required."

" What now ?" said Mrs. Maitland, smiling. " Oh ! a counterbalance to the last :—

' Miss Harrison presents her compliments to Mrs. Maitland, and regrets that the unfavourable state of the weather will prevent herself and brother from spending this evening at Fernwood, agreeable to her polite invitation.

' Holly Cottage, Friday afternoon.'

" I'm sure I should not like Miss Harrison," said

Tom, as his mother finished reading. "What a formal note that is. I *know* she don't like fun."

A hearty laugh greeted Tom's energetically expressed opinion of their new acquaintance, which made him both wince and blush, but soon all fell into quiet employment, and became so deeply interested in the progress of John's volume, that they could scarcely believe the dinner hour had nearly arrived when the bell summoned them to dress.

"I am so sorry we must stop," said Jane, "it is getting so very interesting ; who knows whether poor Felix will ever get safe back in the boat he has built for himself out of the old timbers of the wreck !"

"Of course he will," replied her aunt, "you must wait patiently until to-morrow, but be assured that the hero will not be drowned in the middle of the volume, or there would be an end of the tale."

In the course of the evening Mrs. Maitland said, "There is an old scrap book of mine in the book case which I have not seen for years, and the contents of which will be therefore almost as new to me as to you. I will go and fetch it, and perhaps papa will kindly read some of the scraps aloud."

The book was soon placed in Mr. Maitland's willing hands, who from its well-filled pages made selections according to his taste, his first being the following passage from "Lacon :"—"Wit is one of the few things that has been oftener rewarded than defined. A certain bishop said to his chaplain, 'what is wit ?' The chaplain replied, 'the rectory of B. is vacant, give it me, and *that* will be wit.' 'Prove it, and you shall have it,' replied his lordship. 'It would be a good thing well applied,' replied the chaplain. He was soon after appointed to the benefice."

"So much for a lesson on wit," observed the

reader, “and now for one on contentment,” and he read the title,

“ **ALWAYS HAPPY.**”

“ An Italian bishop struggled through great difficulty without repining, and met with much opposition in the discharge of his episcopal functions without betraying the least impatience. One of his intimate friends, who highly admired the virtues which he thought it impossible to imitate, one day asked the bishop if he could communicate the secret of being ‘ always happy.’ ‘ Yes,’ replied the old man, ‘ I can teach you my secret with great facility, it consists in nothing more than in making a right use of my eyes.’ His friend begged him to explain himself. ‘ Most willingly,’ returned the bishop. ‘ In whatever state I am, I first look up to heaven and remember that my principal business *here* is to get *there*; I then look down to the earth, and call to mind how small a space I shall occupy in it when I come to be interred; I then look abroad into the world, and observe what multitudes there are who are in all respects more unhappy than myself; and thus I learn where true happiness is placed—where all our cares must end; and what little cause *I* have to repine or to complain.’ ”

“ There’s a nice, good old man,” said Jessie, “ I wish there were more like him, both old and young. Go on, papa—what’s next ? ”

“ Why here are some original verses by *myself*, I do believe,” he replied, laughing :—

“ **IMPROPTU ON THE NEW PENNY POST.**”

“ The penny post is now come in,
And made a great sensation,
As every one may clearly see,
Who uses *pene*-tration.

And every one must now confess
 Our rulers '*penny-wise*',
 Though if '*pound foolish*' in the end,
 It won't cause much surprise.
 Yet still to speeches in their praise,
 We'll yield a hearty 'yes';
 For each may have their *penny-worth*,
 Who is not *penni-less*.
 From London down to *Penni-cuick*,
 From Cork to *Peni-stone*,
 Love in *half ounces* may be sent
 If you a *penny* own.
 Then surely by no other means,
 Should letters now be sent,
 May conscience prick each would-be cheat
 And make them *peni-tent*.'

And now here is an Anagram for you to guess," continued Mr. Maitland :—

" 'If you transpose what ladies wear,
 'Twill show what wicked traitors are;
 Again, if you transpose the same,
 You'll see an ancient Hebrew name;
 Change it again, and it will show,
 What all on earth desire to do.
 Transpose the letters yet once more,
 What bad men do you'll then explore.' "

" Is the answer there, uncle ?" asked Jane, peeping over his shoulder.

" Get away, you sly puss," he replied, putting his hand over the page; but the quick eye of his lively niece had caught the first word, "*veil*," and it occasioned very little difficulty to give the required transpositions of "*vile*," "*Levi*," "*live*," and "*evil*."

" Now, boys, here is an arithmetical puzzle for *you*. A man offered to sell his horse (which was a valuable one), by receiving so much a piece for the nails in his horse's shoes. He was to have a farthing for the first

nail, a halfpenny for the second, a penny for the third, and so on, doubling it each time ; there are eight nails in each shoe, thirty-two nails in all—what now would be the price the man would thus obtain for his horse ?”

“ Oh ! that’s very soon done,” said Tom ; and he began muttering to himself—“ a farthing, a halfpenny, a penny,” &c. John watched him with a sly and amused expression of face.

“ Poor Tom !” said he, in a whisper to Richard, “ he little knows what he has undertaken.”

“ I fancied it was very easy indeed,” said Tom, “ but I now find to the contrary, and I will try by myself to-morrow, when I think I can manage it. Go on now, if you please, with mamma’s scraps.”

“ Well, then,” replied his father, “ I will select one especially addressed to the ladies, at least to the *single* ones.”

“ A sprightly writer expresses his opinion of old maids in the following manner : ‘ I am inclined to believe that many aspersions cast upon old maids, tell more to their credit than is generally imagined. Is a woman remarkably neat in her person—‘ she will certainly be an old maid.’ Is she particularly reserved towards the other sex—‘ she has all the prudery of an old maid.’ Is she frugal in her expenses, and exact in her domestic concerns—‘ she is cut out for an old maid.’ And if she is kindly humane to the animals about her, nothing can save her from the appellation of ‘ an old maid.’ In short, I have always found that neatness, modesty, economy, and humanity, are the never-failing characteristics of that terrible creature, ‘ an old maid.’ ”

“ Then I’ll be an old maid,” said Jessie, laughing, “ for I am sure she is a most excellent character.”

“ And I won’t,” said Agnes, “ for I am sure that

mamma is quite as good as any old maid that ever lived."

"Time enough, my dears," said their mother, smiling; "like the celebrated decision of the Welsh judge, 'much may be said on both sides.' Ah! my love," she continued, addressing her husband, "I see you have turned to that curious letter of the celebrated Cardinal Richlieu; just read it aloud, *entire*, and see whether any of the present party can detect anything peculiar in the composition."

Mr. Maitland, accordingly, bespoke particular attention, adding, "This letter was addressed to the French Ambassador at Rome, by Cardinal Richlieu, who, you will all remember, was a most wily and cautious diplomatist; his communication is as follows:—

Sir,

Mons. Compigne, a savoyard by birth, a friar of the order of St. Benedict, is the man who will present you as his passport to your protection, this letter. He is one of the most discreet, the wisest, and the least meddling persons I have ever known, or that I have ever conversed with. He has long earnestly solicited me, and to give him a suitable character, which I have accordingly granted to him importunity, for, believe me I should be sorry you should be ignorant of his real character. I think it my duty to advertise you to have especial regard to all he does, nor venture to say anything before him in any sort, for I may truly say there is none whom I should more regret to see received, and trusted in decent society. And I well know, that as soon as you shall become acquainted with him, you will thank me for this advice; the courtesy, obliges me to desist from saying any thing more on the subject.

Believe me, Sir,

Yours,

RICHELIEU.

"Now you have heard the letter," said Mr. Maitland, "what opinion should you form of Monsieur Compigne?"

"He must have been a most excellent man to obtain such a high character from one who you say was so very cautious," said Richard.

"I said he was wily also," returned his father, "so let us see whether he had more than one meaning to his letter."

He then folded his letter in half lengthwise, and read the *first* page down again, which gave such an opposite account of the *good* friar, that the auditors were surprised and dismayed.

"Of course the cardinal had instructed his correspondents to look for this *one* way of conveying a *double entendre*," said Mrs. Maitland; "but we must not wait supper any longer for Mr. Barnes and his friend; the weather detains them, no doubt."

CHAPTER IV.

MORNING VISITERS.—ARITHMETICAL PUZZLES.—PREPARATIONS FOR THE VISIT.—ENIGMATICAL LIST OF TREES.—CONUNDRUMS.

"If we may judge from present appearances, we must trust to indoor resources again to-day," said Mr. Maitland; "it is rather an advantage to me, for I have promised old Jones an hour's consultation about his late brother's affairs; and shall send Peter down to the lodge to summon him up at once. *Au revoir.*"

John then recommenced his book, but had not pro-

ceeded far, before Mr. Barnes and young Cameron were announced.

"Did you *swim* here?" inquired John, as he greeted his doctor with a shake of the hand.

"No," he replied, smiling; "but Cameron good-naturedly held an umbrella over us both, as I drove up here in Harrison's pony-gig. But now let us have a little medical talk," and he proceeded to examine the sprained ankle, which bore so favourable an aspect, that he decided that his patient would be quite in trim for the ensuing festivities at the Grange.

"Well, that's a comfort," said John, "for I must own I did not half like the idea of going amongst strangers in my present maimed condition. An arm in a sling has always been considered an *interesting* thing, but to go hopping about the world like an old Greenwich pensioner, is none so pleasant to the pride of a youth rising eighteen."

"We shall 'have you on your legs' at the Grange, never fear," replied Mr. Barnes; "only keep quiet until Tuesday, and even then be careful. Did you not think us both great cowards, dear madam," he continued, addressing Mrs. Maitland, "for not turning out last night? I was not at home until after your tea hour, from a round of professional calls, and then James had got such a capital fire, he persuaded me to remain at home."

"Indeed, I do not wonder at it," replied Mrs. Maitland, "but if it should hold up this evening, we shall be glad to see you."

"I can leave Cameron now, if you will have him," said Mr. Barnes, "and then he at least will be sure of his evening's pleasure."

Mr. Cameron blushed, and muttered something about "being quite ashamed," but Mrs. Maitland

politely pressed him to remain their guest for the day ; so the young man, nothing loth, consented, and Mr. Barnes drove off in the pony-gig alone, promising *positively* to return to tea.

“ Poor Mr. Bolus !
There he goes *solus* ! ”

cried John, as he watched the little vehicle down the carriage-drive ; “ I hope he will not be like

“ —— the people of Derby,
—— washed away in the flood ! ”

“ Jessie has heard the tale which John is reading,” said his aunt, “ so she will play a game at chess in the inner drawing-room with Mr. Cameron, whilst you finish it for the rest.”

The rain became somewhat abated in the course of the afternoon, and towards evening ceased altogether, so that when just before tea-time Mr. Barnes made his appearance, he reported that “ a perfect change had taken place in the weather, and he believed it would become a frosty night.”

“ What are you doing there, with a slate, Tom,” asked his father, observing his son, soon after tea, very busily employed making sundry figures.

“ Working away at this horrible sum,” answered Tom. “ I could not have believed that it was half such a job.”

“ What is it ? ” asked Mr. Barnes.

Mr. Maitland repeated the arithmetical question about the price of the horse, which he had put before his party the previous evening.

“ You must ask Cameron that,” jestingly observed his friend, “ ‘ canny Scotland ’ is famous for calculation ; and ‘ Jamie ’ here has not been at ‘ the High School ’ for nothing.”

"I fancy that I can do it," replied Cameron. "Whilst you have been lauding my *native* talents I have got as far as the sixteenth horse-shoe, and as that gives the product of thirty-four pounds two and eight-pence, I suppose that thirty-two will only produce *twice* that sum."

"You are very far from the sum total, there," said Mr. Maitland. "What will you say when I tell you that it will produce a sum more than adequate to pay half the annual amount of the army estimates."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed several voices.

"Here, Tom, give me your slate," said his father, and rapidly putting down some additional figures, he, in a few minutes, exhibited it to the view of his children and guests, with the extraordinary product of £4,473,924 5s. 3*½*d.

"Do you know this arithmetical puzzle?" asked young Cameron: "A man had a hundred pounds given him to lay out in stock for a farm, of which he was to buy one hundred head. He was limited to cows, sheep, and geese; and was to give five pounds a-piece for the first, one pound each for the sheep, and a shilling each for the geese. How many of each sort did he buy, to spend exactly his hundred pounds, and purchase just one hundred head of stock?"

"I will try if I can do that," said Richard. "Papa says that patience and perseverance will conquer every difficulty; and that even the Gordian knot *might* have been untied. So lend me the slate Tom—There," he added a short time afterwards, "I have done it, papa; look at the slate:—"

19 cows at £5 each,	...	£95	0	0
1 sheep at £1,	...	1	0	0
80 geese at 1s. each,	...	4	0	0
<u>100 stock.</u>		<u>£100</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>

" Well done, Richard ! you are a clever, and a persevering lad," said his father, approvingly. " I hope you will continue to cultivate such a steady determination to triumph over difficulties ; for it will be useful to you in whatever station in life you may be placed."

" Shall we meet you at the Grange, Mr. Barnes, any evening next week ?" inquired Mr. Maitland, during supper.

" Yes, I hope so," he replied ; " Mrs. Beaumont has kindly sent invitations for myself and friend for next Friday, when I believe there is rather a large party expected."

" Have you seen the family since their return ?" inquired Jessie ; " we are all curious to know something about the juniors."

" I called there to-day, after leaving here," he replied, " and found them all at home. The young ladies are very much grown and improved. George seems a nice intelligent youth, but has acquired a slight foreign accent and manner. The old lady is just what she was, kind, affable, and benevolent ; and Mrs. Graham is lady-like and agreeable."

" Oh ! then I do not think we need mind going amongst them," said Jessie, " but Agnes and I were both rather nervous about it."

" They spoke very amiably, I might almost say affectionately, of you all," said Mr. Barnes, " as their old playmates ; and rejoiced in the prospect of renewing their intercourse with you ; but come, James," he continued, jumping up from his seat, " we are shamefully late for Saturday night."

" Stop, my friends," said Mr. Maitland, " it is very late, but you must wait a few minutes longer, this is new year's eve."

"Hark!" said Richard, "there is the old clock in the hall striking twelve!"

Mr. Maitland rose from his seat; the rest followed his example: "Take hands all round, my dear ones," he exclaimed. And as they did so, "May God bless you all," he said; "a happy new year to each."

Hearty repetitions of these familiar "household words" followed, and the gentlemen took their departure.

Sunday, at Fernwood, was always observed in a truly Christian spirit, but as sacred subjects should not be lightly handled, we pass over its hallowed offices and employments in reverential silence.

"More snow, and a hard frost again!" said Mr. Maitland, as on Monday morning he stood at the window of the breakfast-room; "how in the world shall we all manage to get to the Grange to-morrow if the weather is like this; it has snowed now for thirty-six hours."

"Pray, papa," said Richard, "do not anticipate evils, we shall be able to walk, no doubt; and the luggage can go by the mule cart; but look, here comes the Beaumonts' groom again, perhaps the party is deferred!"

The almost immediate delivery and perusal of the following notes set all doubts and fears at rest:—

"My dear Mrs. Maitland,

"Fearing that the appearance of the weather may frighten your party from encountering it to-morrow, I shall send my daughter's double sledge over for some of them, and the old coach for the rest; and I hope you will oblige us by joining our dinner party, at the old-fashioned hour of two o'clock.

"Very sincerely yours,
"MARY BEAUMONT.

"The Grange, Monday morning."

"Was there ever such a darling old woman in the world?" exclaimed Agnes. "A sledge! oh! I hope I shall go in that."

Jessie's note was from Julia Graham, and ran thus:—
"My dear Jessie,

"I hope that you and your sister come prepared to be our friends and playfellows as of old. We have many pleasant plans in store for your amusement, which will want kind aid from all in carrying them out. *Old* clothes, especially *finery*, and *gentlemen's* attire, will be extremely useful amongst your luggage; and ask your good papa to lend us his yeomanry uniform, *complete*.

"Affectionately yours,
"JULIA GRAHAM."

"Rub up your intellects, boys," said Mr. Maitland, when they were all assembled in the evening, "and carry as much *mental* contribution to our friends' proposed '*soirées*' as you can. Do you know any good 'charade' for acting, John? for I fancy from the request made for my Captain's uniform, that popular species of theatricals will be amongst our amusements."

"I think I can suggest a better thing than a mere *word* to act," replied John, with a knowing look; "but I shall imitate Miss Julia's prudent reserve, and say nothing more until we meet."

"I have been thinking of something towards the *mental* 'pic-nic,'" said Susan.

"Perhaps it will be better to keep it in store," said her aunt; "novelty frequently adds much to the enjoyment of an amusement."

"Where is that enigmatical list of trees in verse, Jessie," asked her father, "which was sent you some time since from Chester?"

"In my '*omnium gatherum*,'" said Mrs. Maitland, producing from the drawer of her work-table a small *porte feuille*, which in its various compartments held scraps of both poetry and prose.

"Now take some paper and pencils," said Mr. Maitland, "and let us see what answers we can give in verse to these queries. But I propose that we should resolve ourselves into committees of three each, to help in guessing the names of the trees, and in manufacturing the required answers ; and the president of the committee must be also the reader."

The names were then written on slips of paper, and the committees formed as under :—

Mr. Maitland,	Mrs. Maitland,	John,
Susan,	Jane,	Agnes,
Jessie.	Tom.	Richard.

"We must draw for our precedence in answering," said Mrs. Maitland. "There, my love, that is all right, you are number one, and my committee is number three. Now, if you please, read one of the enigmatical verses :—

"'What is the sociable tree, and the dancing tree,
And the tree that's the warmest clad ?
The busiest tree, the chronologists' tree,
And the tree that makes one sad ?'"

A little confabulation followed between the members of the committee, and then Mr. Maitland read as follows :—

"'Oft when on shore from stormy sea,
I waste a midnight taper,
To write in praise of social '*tea*',
And cut a hearty '*caper*'
For joy, no '*medlars*' are at hand,
To quiz my wax and wafer,
Or hint that sailors when on land,
Ne'er put their '*dates*' on paper.
Oft wrapped in '*fir*', the deck I pace,
And list the roaring billow,
And muse on friends in distant place,
Beneath their '*weeping willow*.'"

"Pretty well answered," cried critical John ; "but you have not brought the names in exactly as they stood in the question."

"We shall see how *you* manage, my friend," retorted his uncle. "Now for question number two :—

"The tree in a bottle, the dandiest tree ?
What we offer to friends when we meet ?
The tree of the people, the senior tree ?
And what round fair auncles looks neat ?"

"Rather a poser ! I fear," said John ; "but, however, *nil desperandum* ; come, my friends, let us lay our heads together, and see what we can make of it."

"The first is a *cork*," said Richard.

"The last is a *sandal*," said Agnes.

"Hush ! hush ! whisper low," sung John, *sotto voce* ; then, after a few minutes' pause, he raised his papers, and said, "Now, good folks, listen to my *confession* :—

"Two years ago I went to 'Cork,'
A youngster then so gay and 'spruce,'
A well-fill'd purse was in my 'palm,'
A pop'lar feeling to produce.
No 'elder' there to watch my steps,
No cross old maids to hatch up scandal ;
I met one day a lovely girl,
And knelt me down to tie her 'sandal.'"

"Very good," was the verdict, on this being read, accompanied by some hearty laughter.

"Now, my dear, comes your turn," said Mr. Maitland ; "you will have something to do to surpass friend John's witticisms."

"If a school-boy—the tree that would fright you ?
The tree that would hunger supply ?
The one which to travel invites you ?
And the tree which forbids you to die ?"

Another short whispered colloquy, and then Mrs. Maitland read from her paper :—

“ Alas ! for him who, left in learning’s lurch,
Has cause to dread the master’s wielded ‘ *birch* ;’
Condemn’d to hunger too for lazy crimes,
He longs to seek the ‘ *bread-fruit’s* distant climes ;
To pluck the ‘ *orange* ’ from the loaded bough,
Or place the ‘ *olive* ’ on his weary brow ! ”

“ As usual, my dear, we have to acknowledge you the most clever amongst us,” said her admiring husband ; “ and now I believe we must close your *porte-feuille* for to-night.”

“ How I long for the ride in the sledge to-morrow,” said Agnes, as they were preparing for bed ; “ do, Richard, just run to the front door and look out ; I *hope* the snow will not all be gone in the morning.”

“ Never fear, my dear,” said Richard, running back from his cold errand, “ it snows still, and the frost is as hard as possible.”

“ Now here is a charade quite *apropos* for you,” said his father :—

“ What ice does become,
By the heat of the sun,
Is given to soldiers,
By beat of the drum.”

“ You all shake your heads in ignorance—shall I tell you ? why *not ice* (notice) to be sure.”

“ I was just going to say so,” said John, “ only my reply would have been couched in this elegant phraseology :

“ If so in the *morning*, ‘twill be very rum,
And make my fair cousin look angry and glum.”

“ What a rattle-pate you are, John,” said his aunt ; “ come, say ‘ good night,’ and be sure you are all up in good time in the morning.”

CHAPTER V.

THE RUSSIAN SLEDGE.—THE GRANGE, AND ITS INMATES.—
PROJECTED DRAMA.—FIRST EVENING AT THE GRANGE.—
CONGLOMERATION CLUB.

BRIGHT shone the sun upon the snowy scene without, the next morning, upon which a crowd of eager youngsters gazed with animated pleasure, anxiously awaiting the expected arrival of the promised sledge and coach.

About twelve o'clock a shout from Tom, whose eagerness had taken him half way down the drive, announced that the carriages were in sight, and soon, gliding swiftly along the spotless snow, appeared an equipage, the novelty and gaiety of which might well convert it into "a fairy car," in the eyes of the delighted and inexperienced beholders.

The sledge was drawn by two fine black horses, with flowing manes and tails, their bright eyes unhood-winked, their arching necks untrammelled by a collar. Gay scarlet netting was spread over their glossy backs, and was then confined to the front of the carriage, and at each corner depended a long tassel; whilst the ornaments on the scarlet morocco harness were of bright and burnished silver. The coachman sat in the very centre of his low box, which was covered with a splendid black bear-skin, with silver claws at each corner. His costume, which was both rich and striking, consisted of a dark blue caftan (or wrapping coat), with broad red and silver binding, and a scarlet velvet four-cornered cap, with silver band, beneath which

his foreign countenance and well-trimmed handsome black beard looked remarkably well. As he shook his scarlet reins, and the well-trained horses drew the sledge rapidly towards the house, the youthful group clapped their hands, and shouted with delight.

"Look ! look ! dear mamma," cried Agnes, "here is a real *Russian* sledge, such as we have seen pictures of. Oh ! I never saw anything so beautiful in my life!"

"And see, mamma," continued Jessie, "if there is not old Joseph standing behind, looking just like a Russian himself, in his fur-lined coat and cocked hat ! I did not know him a bit !"

Up glided the graceful vehicle to the door, and its appearance, when stationary, elicited fresh bursts of admiration. The body could accommodate four persons seated as in an English *sociable*, and was provided with a blue cloth coverlet, lined with fur, and trimmed with scarlet and silver, *en suite* with the liveries. The handsome *Ivān* made his national bow, and Joseph descended from his *uncustomary* standard to deliver his mistress's message of "kind regards and assurances that the sledge was quite safe to ride in."

The old coach, which had once been the wonder of the Fernwood juniors, now

" Drew its slow length along,"

and fell into comparative insignificance behind its more showy rival ; and the well fed *bays* were voted "heavy and overladen with harness," when contrasted with the airy lightness of the foreign steeds.

"Your papa and I will go in the coach, my dears," said the ever-kind Mrs. Maitland, "and so will John, if he be prudent ; it therefore only remains to choose four out of the remaining six to ride in this novel and elegant carriage."

"Agnes *must* be one, aunt," said Jane, good naturedly, "and Tom ought to be another, he has been so kind in bringing us word of its approach."

"Very well, my dear ; then you shall be a third," replied her aunt, "and Richard shall be your beau, so now be quick and get ready."

The happy *quartette* were soon equipped, and mounting into their warm, well-cushioned, and fur-lined carriage, Iván again shook his broidered reins, cheered his horses by their customary "*ootche, ootche,*" and off they started down the carriage-drive at a swift pace, gliding as noiselessly along as if the progress had been by magic.

"Is not this delightful, Jane ?" asked Agnes, in an ecstacy. "Oh ! I should like always to ride in a sledge !"

"But you would not wish to have snow always on the ground, would you ?" inquired her cousin.

"Certainly not ; but in winter I should," returned Agnes.

"Look Jane," said Richard, as they approached an ancient gateway, "we are getting near the Grange now. You will soon see the old house."

The gate was flung wide by a clean old woman, and the light vehicle sped swiftly along a fine bold avenue of beeches and elms, handsome and majestic in their proportions, even whilst standing in the sterile garb of winter ; and at the end appeared the quaint old mansion. Partaking both of the baronial and the feudal style of architecture, it presented a curious combination ; but the mixture of ivied turrets, and pointed gables of the ancient Norman keep, and mullioned Tudor windows, formed objects of great interest as a general effect, however incongruous in their details. At the curious old nail-studded door stood a good-looking

youth, with a fair *moustache* just visible on the upper lip, who advanced to meet the party with a frank, good-humoured air, which set them at their ease at once. He spoke with the slight foreign accent Mr. Barnes had mentioned, but without any foreign idiom, as he said, "My grandmother begged I would be ready to do the honours to the sledge party, which she rightly guessed would arrive first. You are my old friend Richard, I know ; and this, I suppose, is '*little Tom*,' as we called him four years ago. Are these your sisters ?"

Richard did the honours of introduction, and then George preceded them through a fine old hall (hung with family pictures, groups of old armour, and time-worn banners), to the oak parlour, where they found the ladies assembled.

Mrs. Beaumont was the very *beau ideal* of an old English lady. She had been a celebrated beauty in her youth, and at three score years and ten, retained great traces of her early charms ; her eyes were still bright and intelligent, and her grey hair was smoothed over a brow which remained expansive and unwrinkled. Her features were regular, and her whole countenance expressive and amiable. She was beloved by high and low, for the urbanity of her manners, the clearness of her judgment, and the benevolence of her heart.

Mrs. Graham was a sweet, amiable woman, whose early loss of a beloved husband had tinged her character with a gentle sadness, which made her still more dear and interesting to her loving children.

The young ladies received their new guests kindly ; they were both pretty, but of different styles. Julia, the eldest, partook of the bright intellectual look of her grandmother, whilst Mary had more of the pensive, quiet air of her mother.

"Here comes the coach at last," cried Richard, as that rather cumbrous, but useful vehicle drew up to the doorway.

Mrs. Beaumont rose to receive the other party, and after the exchange of most friendly greetings, said, "Now you will all like to take off your wrappings at once ; so girls, show your friends to their room ; and George, take these young gentlemen into the *omnibus*."

John was able to make a very respectable *entrée* and exit by the help of a stick, and followed George and his cousins up a wide old oak staircase, with wonder and pleasure at the great extent and curious construction of the old house, and George at length ushered them into a large room in the upper story, which was sufficiently capacious to contain six small camp bedsteads, arranged as in a school dormitory.

"Grandmamma calls this the *omnibus*," he said, laughing, "because, she says, there is *always room* for *one* more in it. I hope you don't mind being so high up in the house ; my room is just at the end of this long passage."

"Oh ! we shall like it amazingly," said Richard. "What a splendid view there is from this old east window."

"Yes," said John, "it is a 'very pleasant resting-place after our toilsome ascent,' as the guide-books have it, or as Mrs. Howitt *might* have said :—

'The way into our bed-room is up a winding stair,
But there are many pleasant things to see when you get there.'"

"Now, my friends," said Mrs. Beaumont, after dinner, "let us draw round the fire and have a little consultation about our plans for our party on Friday next. 'The Christmas tree' is all prepared, but we

shall want several other things to fill up our evening with. There will also be the balloon."

"No, no ! dear granny," said Julia, playfully putting her hand before her grandmamma's mouth ; "you must not tell about *that*."

"Julia always likes to make what the Russians call, 'little surprises,'" said her mother, smiling.

"Of what nature do you wish your amusements to be?" asked Mrs. Maitland ; "active, or passive?"

"Active," "active," resounded on all sides.

"Well then, as the Christmas tree is a novelty to most of us poor rustics, I presume that had better be the *first* pleasure of the evening. At what period you will let off your balloon I know not"—Julia laughed—"but suppose an acted charade or a dance were to come between?"

"Oh ! yes, a charade, a charade," exclaimed the youthful voices.

"But, John, you said you could propose something better than a mere word to perform," said his uncle ; "let us hear your suggestion."

"Why I thought, uncle, that a *proverb* might be dramatised, instead of a word."

"The best way will be to *write* us a sort of drama to learn our parts from," said George.

"Oh !" said John, "there's no necessity for that. I'll give the *outline* of a plot if you like ; but I am sure none of the present party will need a prompter."

"Well, my dears, I have got a famous place for you as a theatre, or any thing else," said Mrs. Beaumont ; "and as this spoilt boy here," with an affectionate glance at her grandson, "has persuaded me into buying some cast-off scenery from the provincial theatre of N——, you will have no difficulty, I dare say, in

making your drama effective. But now come and see your room, and then you can find some amusement for the evening." The whole party then rose and attended their hostess, who led the way down sundry queer old passages, until she reached a large vaulted room, in the oldest portion of the building. "There, my dears," she said, "now do what you like here; Joseph and Ivān are at your service as assistants, and I hope you will enjoy yourselves very much. After Friday the theatre must be closed, to make way for a little crotchet of mine."

The young folks stayed a short time behind the elders, to make remarks on the capabilities of the room, and the requirements of the drama; and John then informed them, in confidence, of a "proverb" he had thought of, which met with unanimous applause.

"What are these queer-looking wooden towers in the court yard?" inquired Tom, who had been looking through the window.

"Oh! don't ask!" cried Julia, hastily.

"That is to be another of your 'little surprises,' I suppose," said Susan, laughing.

Mrs. Beaumont, in the absence of the young people had told Mr. and Mrs. Maitland how she had fortunately obtained her sledge.

"You remember, I dare say, that we all passed a part of last winter in St. Petersburg," she said. "Some years ago, Count Tchernikliebb was in England, and received such kindness from my dear husband, that he always expressed a desire to return his hospitality in his native country; and last year we were induced to accept his kind proposal, that we should continue our tour from Berlin, to the far-famed 'city of the Czar,' and highly pleased we all were with our month's sojourn there. This year, Count Tchernikliebb

was to pass the winter in Paris, with his son-in-law, Prince Kartofelofski ; so he wrote, and offered my daughter his sledge (which her children had so delighted in last year), if she thought it worth while to bring it over, on the chance of being able to use it in our ‘uncertain climate.’ Ivān was highly pleased at the idea of coming to England ; and as Joseph was with us in Petersburg, he had picked up enough Russian to make the poor fellow understand a little, and now *he* is trying to learn English.”

After tea, Mrs. Beaumont requested they would commence some of their amusing games, “In short, you must make yourselves at home, my dears,” she kindly said.

“Now, Jane,” said her aunt, “what was the contribution you promised to our store?”

“I have never yet played at it, aunt,” she replied, “but Eliza Danvers told me of it, just before we left town ; she called it ‘Conglomeration.’ It is something like ‘Nouns and questions,’ only that we must each write *several* words on slips of paper, then throw them together, and draw out so many indiscriminately. We must then write them as we take them up on a sheet of paper as a *list*, and weave them in the order in which they stand, into a tale, an anecdote, a piece of poetry, or a newspaper paragraph.”

“We shall some of us make a fine mess of it, I think,” said George, laughing ; “but you must pardon us half-and-half foreigners if we do not get on as well as you do.”

Paper and pencils were soon produced, and smiling faces bent over the busy hands which, ever and anon, threw a little twisted scrap on to the old oak table.

“Hold ! enough !” cried Mr. Maitland, as a little heap of these tiny MSS. lay before him. “Now let

us draw—not less than six a-piece, and not more than twelve."

"Well, I've got a pretty lot of incongruities," said John, in a tone of chagrin : "'*Englishmen*'—'*New Zealand*'—'*Lord Brougham*'—'*The Apollo Belvidere!*' what possible connexion can there be between these Antipodes in *both* cases?"

"Oh ! *you* will manage," said Jessie, laughing. "I have something still more ridiculous."

Some little pause now ensued, only interrupted by an occasional interjection or light laugh from some of the would-be authors ; the study of whose various attitudes and countenances formed a source of great amusement to Mrs. Beaumont and her daughter, the latter of whom had been appointed "Reader" to "the Conglomeration Club" by general consent, in lieu of being a contributor to the papers. Mr. Maitland and his clever wife kept their pencils continuously at work. John went off at score, after sundry grimaces, nibbling at his pencil, and scratchings out of one or two beginnings. The girls helped each other with a wished-for word or two, and got on famously. Richard sat with his hands tightly clasped over his eyes, and his elbows on the table, until a happy thought seemed to strike him all at once, and he scribbled on with energy and quickness. George pushed out his lips, caressed his infant *moustache*, run his fingers through his hair, and glanced at his mother for inspiration, and soon after added his scrap to the collection.

"Now shuffle them all well together," said Mr. Maitland, "and give them to Mrs. Graham," who received the handful of papers, read them to herself first, and then communicated their contents aloud, in the following order :—

“‘ Simplicity,’ ‘ German Wool-work,’ ‘ Friendship,’ ‘ Brussels,’ ‘ Bazaar,’ ‘ Insipid,’ ‘ Herne Bay,’ ‘ Rheumatism.’”

“PASSAGE FROM THE NEW NOVEL OF
‘SIMPLICITY.’”

“Do, dear mamma, look at this beautiful piece of “*German Wool-work*,” cried Anastasia Mordaunt; ‘it has been sent to me as a token of “*Friendship*,” by my friend Natalie Nymbulhande, from “*Brussels*.[”]

‘It is very beautiful indeed, my dear,’ replied her mother, ‘and will come in very *apropos* for our “*Bazaar*,” if you can spare it.’

‘Yes, mamma, you shall have it with pleasure. I only hope ours will not prove such an “*insipid*” affair as the last we were at.’

‘What, the one we attended at “*Herne Bay*,” my love? I am sure I hope not, for the stupid concern would have faded from my mind, had I not there obtained a most enduring remembrance in this tiresome “*rheumatism*,” which has never left me since.’”

“Well, *that’s* very good, whose ever it is,” said several voices, *Susan Harper* alone being mute.

Mrs. Graham read on :—

“‘ Honour,’ ‘ Trifles,’ ‘ Gingerbread,’ ‘ Gunpowder Plot,’ ‘ Monster,’ ‘ Porcupine,’ ‘ Memory.’”

“Some men there are, who “*honour*” hold
As “*trifles*” light as air;
Who sell their principles for gold,
Like “*gingerbread*” at fair.
Such demon passion sure did hatch
“*Gunpowder plot*” in Faux,
And made the “*monster*” hold the match,
Whose aim the patriot shocks;
Sure had he liv’d, a thousand ills
In varied forms he’d see;
Conscience, with “*Porcupine*”-like quills,
Would wound his ‘*Memory*.[”]

“Papa wrote that!” said Tom, and he did not deny it.

Mrs. Graham smiled as she raised the next paper, and her quick glance directed to her son, who tried to look very unconscious, gave a clue to the author of the following lines :—

“‘Mother,’ ‘Apples and Pears,’ ‘Liberty,’ ‘Earth,’ ‘Jews,’ ‘Englishmen,’ Work-table.’

‘Oh ! really, dear “*Mother*,”
I’m quite in a pother,
To choose between “*Apples and Pears*,”
Were “*Liberty*” granted,
The fruit now most wanted,
As ’tis dinner, are French *Pommes de terres* ;
These Apples of “*Earth*,”
How useful in dearth ;
To speak in their praise, who’s not able ?
“*Jews*,” “*Englishmen*,” all sorts,
Wish them sent in, from all ports ;
“*Vide*” Newspaper on your ‘*Work-table*.’”

“Come, that’s pretty well for a *half-and-half foreigner*,” laughed John.

“This is a very unique production,” said Mrs. Graham, as she glanced over the next paper ; “I rather think it is an exemplification of the old proverb that ‘two heads are better than one,’ just listen :—

‘Happiness,’ ‘Poverty,’ ‘Politics,’ ‘Young England,’ ‘Moustachios,’ ‘German University,’ ‘Gooseberry-fool,’ ‘Veteran.’

THE FAMILY PARTY.

Mild Margaret.

“Does ‘*happiness*’ depend on wealth ?
Then ‘*poverty*’ must be a curse,
But should we be possess’d of health,
It matters little, a light purse.”

Petulant Patty.

“Of ‘*politics*’ and matters grave,
‘*Young England*’ still does prate with noisy sneer ;
If their ‘*Moustachios*’ they would shave,
Their speech, if not their arguments, ‘would clear.’”

Doctor Dronewell.

“From ‘*German University*,’
A youth has written here to me,
To ask what’s the rule
To make ‘*Gooseberry fool*.’
What a curious request to a ‘*Veteran*.’”

Mrs. Dronewell.

“Then don’t be a dunce,
Write our own out at once,
I defy him to find out a *better-un*. ””

“You are right, my dear madam,” said Mr. Maitland, when the laugh occasioned by this *original* composition had subsided. “I am very sure my witty nephew here helped his fair friend Julia to make that ‘gooseberry-fool.’ ”

“Order, order, chair, chair,” cried John, and the fair “Reader” resumed her office.

“The next paper,” she continued, “is entitled—

‘EXTRACT FROM THE ‘CONGLOMERATION
GAZETTE.’

(*From our own Correspondent.*)

‘Englishmen,’ ‘Railway,’ ‘New Zealand,’ ‘Patience,’ ‘Lord Brougham,’ ‘Apollo Belvidere,’ ‘Cute,’ ‘Rosebud,’ ‘Honest,’ ‘America,’ ‘Bohemian glass.’

‘In these days of enterprize and achievement, who shall put limits to the stupendous ideas of the great intellect of man, or to the practical results of the perseverance of “*Englishmen*.” When news is communicated from one end of our native land to the other, literally with the rapidity of lightning—when a suspension bridge spans the mighty Niagara, and a “*Railway*” is talked of across the Great Desert, we may be pardoned for not regarding with perfect incredulity the project of the latter mode of transit in “*New Zealand*.” Far as our Antipodes now are behind us in arts and sciences, yet if we act with prudence, and

wait with "*patience*," who knows but that such rapid strides may be made in the track of civilization, that ere another century passes, our infant colony may boast a native "*Lord Brougham*," in their senate house, or an "*Apollo Belvidere*" amongst their statues? Much of the character of the New Zealander is hopeful and promising. They are "*cute*" and industrious, and if our royal "*Rosebud*" of England will but continue to treat them well, we have every reason to think they will be grateful and "*honest*" in return, and not be like "*America*," who ungratefully broke her faith with the mother country, as if it was as brittle as '*Bohemian glass*.'

" You have given a more hopeful account of the New Zealanders than I ever heard before, John," said his uncle ; " but I trust, for the sake of our emigrating countrymen, that you may have been gifted with 'second sight' in your prognostications respecting them."

" The next paper will be the last," said Mrs. Graham, " for one or two of the party have abstracted their contributions whilst our attention has been otherwise engaged."

" Well, as I fancy that the one which *is* left, will probably be the *best*," said Mrs. Beaumont, " and it is getting rather late, we had perhaps better be content, so now, my dear, proceed with your reading."

" 'Sincerity,' 'Medley,' 'Vanity,' 'Nun,' 'Bracelet,' 'Britania,' 'Leap-frog,' 'Wood-fire,' 'Truth,' 'Carisbrook Castle,' 'Cream cheese,' 'Miniature,' "

read Mrs. Graham, and a general murmur ran round the circle that it was a regular "hotch-potch," or as John expressed it, "a stickler." Mrs. Graham proceeded :—

"Forced by "*Sincerity*" to own that I
Do sometimes join, a "*Medley*" to produce,
T would be a selfish sort of "*Vanity*,"
Or lonely "*Nun*"-like feeling to refuse.

"Off, worthless trappings," how can fingers move,
Trammell'd and bound by fashion's bonds and fetters ?
'Lie there my' "*bracelet*;" now my fancies rove,
A line thus partly quoting from my betters ;
"*Britannia's*" boast, her Shakespeare seems to rise,
And play at "*leap-frog*" in my busy brain ;
Richard's foul deeds, his fears, his dreams, his cries,
His doom—all follow in an ideal train.
Far from the "*Wood-fire's*" warmth, and genial glow,
"*Truth*" owns my thoughts now wander where they please,
From "*Car'sbrook Castle's*" sad and gloomy show,
To Portsmouth, Cowes, and thence to rich "*Cream-cheese*,"
A "*miniature*" portrait here you find
Of what is often passing in a mind."

"That is mamma's composition I am sure," said Jessie admiringly.

"And where is *yours*?" asked her mother, smiling.

"Oh ! in the "*Wood-fire*," she replied. "I had got such a heterogeneous mess, that it was quite impossible for a novice like me to arrange them in any sort of order."

"Perhaps you may do better the next time we try the game," returned her mother ; "we had too many words allowed for insertion to-night."

CHAPTER VI.

LES MONTAGUES RUSSES.—MANAGER JOHN, AND HIS COMPANY.—
MISS STRICKLAND'S ENIGMA.—THE REPLY.—GERMAN ENIGMA.
—TRANSLATIONS.

THE continuance of the bright frosty weather the next day, was quite propitious for the introduction of the party to the “little surprise” which Julia had in store for them. At either end of the large court-yard at the back of the house, about forty yards apart, was erected a square battlemented tower, about twenty feet high, ascended at the back by steps, which terminated in a small room open in front. From each of these towers descended a broad platform, in a gradual decline to the ground, fenced on each side by a boarding of about three feet high, and covered entirely with a thick coating of snow, over which water had been poured for the last two days, and they consequently now formed two parallel roads of solid ice ! On ascending the steps, the strangers stood in surprise, half mixed with fear.

“ You are welcome to ‘les montagues russes,’ ” cried Julia, in delight at their astonishment. “ George and I were so enchanted with the ice hills in St. Petersburg last year, that we persuaded dear grandmamma to let us try to have them in England this winter. Ivān helped to build them,” she continued, “ and George is a famous guide down the hills, so I hope you will let him take you down one at a time.”

Ivān, who with Joseph, was in attendance, grinned with pleasure to see the surprise and affright depicted on the countenances of the young English ladies, but

advanced very respectfully to place the tiny sledge, used in the descent, ready for his young master, who then assumed a pair of handsome worked gauntlets. The pretty worked cushion was carefully adjusted by Joesph, and George seated himself at the end of it, leaving space for another in front.

"Now, young ladies," he said, "who will have the first ride?"

"Oh! not I," "not I," said the four Fernwood cousins.

"Well, Julia, *you* come, and let your friends see that there is no danger," continued George; and his sister, nothing loth, seated herself in front of him, took hold of the sides of the sledge, and kept her feet straight out before her.

"Ready?" asked George, in an animated tone.

"Ready!" replied Julia, firmly.

A stroke of his gauntletted hand on the slippery surface (which commenced about a yard within the room), sent them forward instantly on their icy road, and in one moment they were swiftly descending the almost perpendicular height; and ere the half-terrified observers could express their fears and apprehensions, the graceful little car was safely at its journey's end.

Ivān had descended the stairs, and run round in time to help his young lady to rise from her lowly seat, and to carry the sledge up to the other tower. In a few minutes, the party they had left saw George again seat himself behind his courageous sister, and in three seconds they had again traversed the icy hill which divided them.

"Oh! it is delicious," said Julia, as she ran laughing and panting up the steps again to her companions. "Do some of you try it."

"No, indeed, I dare not," said Jessie, shrinking back ; "will *you*, Susan ?"

"I know I shall scream, if I do," said Susan.

"Well, so long as you do not *pinch*," said George, laughing, "I do not mind. Now do not be frightened. I am very careful, and never play pranks with ladies, I assure you."

Susan grew pale, but at length, with a slight shudder, seated herself as desired.

"Say *when*," said George, in a lively tone.

"Oh ! *now*," said poor Susan, shutting her eyes, and off they went in a moment !

"Well ! it is not so bad as you thought it, is it ?" inquired the youthful charioteer, as they reached the end of their first journey.

"Not nearly so," replied Susan, her colour returning a little. "I shall like it better as we go back."

"You behaved very well," he returned, "for you neither screamed nor pinched ; and some do both the first time. But here we are at the top of the steps ; now sit down again, and try to keep your eyes *open* this time."

"Well, Susan, how do you like it ? is it very dreadful ? were you not frightened ?" were some of the questions with which she was greeted on re-ascending the steps, to which she replied, "Very much indeed ! Oh ! no ; not so dreadful as I fancied. I was frightened at first ; at least I felt exactly as if I was thrown out of a window, when we first set off, but I liked it in coming back."

"I knew you would," said the lively Julia. "I mean to have a sledge of my own some day. But come, do some of you other girls try it." And so, by dint of enticing, and force of example, before very long each one had partaken of the peculiar pleasure arising

from this novel mode of transit, except poor John, who was obliged to practise great self-denial in refusing to partake of the tempting amusement. George had proved himself a very tender and careful "squire of dames," but became mischievous towards his male companions, each of whom he contrived to upset in the soft snow, purposely left on each side of the icy road, to receive such unlucky wights.

"Now, see Ivān and me go down together," said George, and turning to the Russian, again in attendance, he said in his native language, "Padi soudâ, Ivān, prenēci drougori sāni," (come here, Ivān ; bring the other sledge), a command which made the very hairs on the Muscovite's black beard tingle with delight.

"Now, George, pray do not play any foolish tricks," said his sister Mary, who did not relish the northern sport as well as Julia did.

"Oh ! never fear," he replied, *kneeling* down on his sledge, and making signs for Ivān to do the same on *his*, placed by his side, and in another moment his loud "pashol ! pashol !" sent them both forth in impetuous rivalry.

"Oh ! it is very pretty, but it is very frightening," said Agnes, trembling ; "but look ! look ! what are they going to do now ? worse and worse ! they mean to return lying on their faces !"

"Well, here we are, quite safe, you see," said George, with an exulting laugh, as he again came up the stairs. "Was not that famous ?"

"Yes, but all your fair friends were frightened at your temerity," said Mary.

"Were you ?" he inquired. "Oh ! that was nothing ; we will show you some more Russian tricks to-morrow."

They then descended, and Jane gave such an ani-

mated account of their morning's pleasure, that Mrs. Beaumont felt quite repaid for her expenditure upon the foreign amusement.

"After dinner, my dear Madam," said she, addressing Mrs. Maitland, "you and your husband must have a drive with my daughter in the sledge, for in this uncertain climate these northern pleasures are sometimes of short duration. I ordered dinner half an hour earlier on purpose."

"Let John be of the party, grandam," said George, good-naturedly, "he has not dared to go down the hills, for fear of hurting his ankle."

When dinner was concluded, John, who had been installed "Manager" of the intended theatre, consulted with his "company" as to some proposed play-bills, and then proceeded, "I have cast my characters, thus : You, Susan, are to be a country woman, Jessie is your daughter, and Richard is your husband."

"Then he will be younger than his child," observed Jessie, laughing.

"Oh! never mind that," said John, hastily, "Richard must stoop, and wear a wig. Well—now, you, Miss Julia, I want to be a German Countess, and Jane is to be your mother."

"Just the same blunder about age again," interrupted Julia, archly.

"Is there ? well, I did not know it ; but you *must* be the Countess, because you can speak German, and we must have a word or two brought in, and you have a little foreign accent too. For the same cause, George is to be your husband, the Count—what shall we call him ? give us an idea."

"Oh? Von *Blunderbuschell*, or anything that sounds very full in the mouth," said George, "something with *s c h* in it by all means."

“Will Von *Schlossinpoole* do ?” asked John.

“Yes, capitally ; go on.”

“You, Miss Mary, must please to be a French waiting maid,” he continued.

“Indeed, that is quite out of my style,” she replied ; “I have not half vivacity enough !”

“Oh ! you shall not have much to do or to say, only a few interjections, and shrugs to give effect to them. And you, Agnes, are to be the Countess’s little boy.”

All laughed at this *finale*, and poor Agnes declared almost with tears in her eyes, that she “could not, no, nor she would not, be dressed in boy’s clothes.”

“The clever ‘*Justine*’ here,” said John, bowing to Mary, “will, I am sure, be able to make you a dress from the stores of her *Parisian* imagination, which will answer our purpose without distressing your young-lady-like feelings ; but Alexis you *must* be, for I must have those pretty blue eyes and flaxen curls for my little Count.”

“And what are *you* to be, John ?” asked Richard.

“Oh ! I’m to be Squire Dobson, and Jane is my dear old wife—and now don’t ask any more questions, but just read over this paper, and say if it will do, for here comes Ivān and the sledge !”

When the party returned it was comprised of *three* ladies and John, Mr. Maitland having vacated his seat in favour of Miss Harrison, for whom Mrs. Beaumont had requested them to call. Jessie and Richard gave a quick arch glance at Tom, as this addition to their party was announced, who coloured at the recollection of his decided opinion against the young lady’s agreeability.

When seated round the social fire in the evening however, she proved so cheerful and amiable, and fell so good-naturedly into the tone of the company, that

he communicated the alteration of his opinion to John in the emphatic, but brief whisper of "*she'll do,*" to which the other replied in the same low tone, "exactly, she'll prove a '*brick.*'"

"Have you ever seen that enigma by Miss Agnes Strickland?" she inquired, "beginning

'From a race the most scorn'd and ignoble it springs ;'

and receiving a reply in the negative, she took out her pocket-book, and unfolding a paper, read—

"From a race the most scorn'd and ignoble it springs,
Yet is loved by the learned, and trusted by kings;
The sceptre's a bauble, when placed by its side,
And the crown would be useless, if this were denied;
'Tis the power of the monarch, the people's defence,
It can win them to peace, or to madness incense.
It is silent; yet eloquence has at command;
'Tis the statesman's assistant, the pride of each land;
It is voiceless, and yet from the South to the North,
To the ends of the earth has its language gone forth;
It familiar hath been with the learning of ages,
With the folly of fools, and the wisdom of sages;
More various its uses, in good, or in ill
Than the changes in April, or Womankind's will;
Death oft hangs on its motions, or life on its gift,
It can sink to despair, or to ecstacy lift;
'Tis the aider of good, or promoter of evil,
The servant of God, or the tool of the Devil!"

"It sounds very good and very difficult," was the general remark; and one or two guesses made proving incorrect, Miss Harrison continued, "I have a poetical answer here, but the author is anonymous; I will read it :—"

"From the barrenest soil, and the meanest of things,
Oft the wealth of the world and its luxury springs;
Thus the rude rocky caverns, the diamond may hold,
And the dull, dingy strata, the pure veins of gold:

Though the damp loathsome pit have no charms to our eyes,
 Which the warmth-bearing fuel abundant supplies,
 Yet our homes would seem wretched and dismal the while,
 Were our hearths to continue uncheer'd by its smile.
 The earth, though with bounteous provisions it teem,
 To the glance superficial, a desert may seem ;
 The most worthless have each their fit object and end,
 Whilst they all in unvarying harmony blend.
 And thus means the most simple, results oft attain,
 For which power and science have striven in vain ;
 Ancient Rome was preserv'd in its splendour and peace,
 By the timely alarm of its patriot—Geese,
 And they still can conduce to the welfare of men,
 For the safety of nations may rest on a—pen."

"The reply is quite as clever as the enigma, I think," said Mrs. Beaumont, "and both are very *true*."

"Julia, my love," said her mother, "where are those two enigmas by Schiller, which you copied, and our good Miss Chapman translated ?"

"I will fetch them, mamma," she replied, and leaving the room she quickly returned with the promised papers.

"Now, Miss Julia, have the kindness to give it us first in the original," said John ; "I like to hear the 'rolling rumbling' from the '*fader land*,' although I cannot understand a word of it."

"On one condition," she replied, "which is, that you all drop the '*Miss*' in future; we must be Julia and Richard, Jessie and Mary, John and George, as if we were *still* young ; so now pray attend, John," and she read from her paper

"RAETHSEL."

"Kennst du die Brücke ohne Bogen
 Und ohne Joch, von Diamant,
 Die über breite Ströme Wogen
 Errichtet eines Greisea Hand ?

Er baut sie auf in wenig Tagen
 Geräuschlos, du bemerkst es kaum ;
 Doch kann sie schivere Lasten tragen
 Und hat für hundert Wagen Raum
 Doch Raum entfernt der Greis sich wieder,
 So hüpf't ein knabe froh daher,
 Der reisft die Brücke eilig nieder,
 Du siehst auch ihre Spur nicht mehr.

“v. SCHILLER.”

“Very fine indeed ! I dare say,” said John ; “now please to tell us what it is all about.”

“Miss Chapman has translated it thus,” she replied :—

“Do you know the bridge without arches
 And without supports, formed out of diamond,
 Which over the billows of the wide-spread stream
 An ancient hand hath erected ?
 He built it even in a few days ;
 Silently, and scarce perceivable !
 On its sparkling road it heavy loads can bear,
 And room has for a hundred carriages !
 Yet scarcely has the Ancient Hand removed far off,
 Than a merry boy skips on the bridge,
 Who quickly breaks it down ;
 And e'en his footsteps are no more beheld !”

“Tell us, dear Julia,” said some of the juniors, and upon her giving the solution as “*Ice*,” they all agreed that it was “very good indeed, and beautifully expressed in the translation.”

“And as every thing loses by translation except a *Bishop*,” said John, laughing, “no doubt it is much better in the original.”

“Now for enigma the second,” continued Julia. “Come, George, give it us with the true *University* accent.”

George took the paper, and read with much emphasis and animation the fine words of the German poet,

which even to the uninitiated, conveyed a powerful impression.

“RAETHSEL.”

“ Ich wohne in einem steinern Haus,
Da lieg ich verbergen und schlafe,
Doch ich trete hervor, ich eile heraus,
Gefordert mit eisener Waffe.
Erst bin ich unscheinbar und schwach, und, Klein,
Mich kann dein Athem bezwingen,
Ein Regentropfen schon saugt mich ein ;
Doch mir wachsen im Siege die Schwingen,
Wenn die mächtige Schwester sich zu mir gesellt,
Erwachs ich zum fürchtbarn Gebieter der Welt.

“v. SCHILLER.”

“ Oh ! genius of the tongues! kind, clever Chapman ! lend thy aid again !” spouted John in appeal to Julia, who laughingly handed the translation to Mary for perusal, thus,

“ I dwell securely in a house of stone,
There do I lie, concealed, and sleeping,
Till summoned forth by iron tool, alone
I hasten out, first often slyly peeping ;
At first I’m feeble, weak, and small ;
Your breath, my strength can soon renew,
I can absorb all rainy drops that fall ;
My pinions grow in Victory anew ;
And if my powerful *sister* comes to me,
All people quail at my sovereignty !”

After a few false guesses, this enigma was solved by Mrs. Maitland, as being the subtle element “*Fire*,” and “*the powerful sister*” alluded to, as being “*Air*, or *Wind*,” and soon afterwards the party separated for the night.

CHAPTER VII.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE FETE.—BON MOT.—DEFINITIONS.

“We have a great deal to do this morning, my friends,” exclaimed John, as soon as the breakfast things were removed; “our theatre had better be arranged to-day, instead of all being left until to-morrow.”

“You don’t want us all, John, do you?” inquired George, “because we *must* go to the ‘*hills*’ again to-day, and I should like to take Miss Harrison down them.”

“Jessie and I will stop with you, John,” said Mary.

“And so will I,” said Tom.

“I should enjoy taking your ‘governor’ down,” said George, aside, to Richard, “but I do not like to ask him.”

“I am sure papa will enjoy it too,” he replied; and Mr. Maitland agreeing to his young friend’s proposal, ‘manager John’ was left with his three assistants, and the rest departed to their *slippery* amusement. When the dinner hour reassembled them, the party had been augmented by the arrival of Miss Chapman, whose return was hailed with genuine pleasure by her pupils as well as their brother, and the two elder ladies.

“She is sure to have brought some new games, or something amusing,” said Julia. “It was her idea, making the ‘balloon’ grandmamma talked of.”

“When shall we see it?” inquired the Fernwood girls, in a breath.

“Not until to-morrow,” returned Julia, enjoying their impatience.

"There, girls, you are all wanted," cried George, to whom "the manager" had been talking. "John says we must go and have a sort of rehearsal, and ask Miss Chapman to accompany you to the 'green room.'"

Arrived at this apartment, which was a small stone-paved room, leading out of the old hall, they proceeded in their arrangements.

"We *must* tell these friends all about the *balloon*, Julia," urged Mary; "or the plan you spoke of this morning cannot be well carried out without their assistance."

"True," replied Julia; "and the 'Fernwood troop,' as John called them, received the information requisite. And so John," concluded Julia, "you must write us the words we want before to-morrow evening."

"To hear is to obey," said John, with eastern salutation.

"Your eastern phrase has given me an idea for another of those 'little surprises,' which our dear Julia so delights in," said Miss Chapman. And she named an addition to their projected amusements for the morrow, which elicited great applause and admiration.

"What a funny little cell this is," said Agnes, glancing round their small apartment, with a mixture of amusement and fear.

"I shall call it a 'cell-aret,'" said John, "particularly as there are such 'choice spirits' in it," a witticism which procured him a hearty laugh, as the party returned to the oak parlour.

"Well, Miss Harrison," inquired Mrs. Maitland in the evening, "how did you enjoy your ride down 'les Montagnes Russes'?"

"Extremely," she replied, "it is a most exhilarating amusement. The quick passage through the air seems to impart a peculiar lightness to the feelings. I think

it must resemble flying, which I have always wished to do."

"And you, Mr. Maitland?" asked Mrs. Graham, "how did you like the coachmanship of my madcap son here?"

"He was merciful to an old chap like me," returned Mr. Maitland, smiling, "but I did not much relish it. I should define this northern amusement, as '*a perilous pleasure, perversely persevered in, by the rude Russian, the frivolous Frenchman, and the imitative Islander.*'"

"You would be an acquisition to a party playing definitions, sir," remarked Miss Chapman.

"What are they?" inquired he.

"We have often played at the game," said Mrs. Beaumont, "and very amusing it is; suppose we try a round to-night."

"The expression which Mr. Maitland made use of just now, about 'the rude Russian,'" said Mary, "reminds me of a witticism a German Count once told us of at Dresden. He asked me if I 'knew amongst whom Poland was now divided,' and upon my replying in the negative, he said, 'les Rudes-chiens (les Russiens), les Preux-chiens (les Prussiens), et les Autres-chiens (les Autrichiens).'"

"Ah!" said John, "Poor Poland is indeed 'gone to the dogs.'"

Mr. Harrison arrived to tea, and soon fell, with the ease of a well-bred man, into the innocent amusements of the evening.

Miss Chapman, as having been the first to name the game of 'definitions,' was requested to propose a 'word' for them, to be written on, and she accordingly gave "Truth."

Pencils and paper were again in requisition, and ere

very long each person had written a short definition of this quality, and laid them folded and *anonymously* on the table.

"Now, Mr. Harrison, you shall be the 'reader' to-night," said Mrs. Beaumont, and he accordingly began the pithy little papers thus :—

"Truth," he said, "is defined to be,

'A wholesome, but unpalatable medicine.'

'The best counsel to employ on a trial.'

'A sharp instrument, requiring a skilful hand to use it without hurting.'

'A looking-glass, held by the hand of friendship for the discovery of our faults.'

'Ithuriel's spear.'

'A tiara of brilliants upon the brow of the possessor.'

'The Pastor's privilege.'

'The shield of Innocence in the battle field of existence.'

'The corner stone of character.'

'Preserved ginger, pungent even when palatable.'

'Substance, not shadow.'

'A diving belle,
As casuists tell,
Content to dwell
At the foot of a well.'

'The pariah of Parliament.'

"And what is this?" he continued, "a *blank* piece! is truth a blank? and here is another strange contribution, look!" and he exhibited the scrap bearing the marks as follows, "+ + + +".

"I should think," said Mr. Maitland, "that the possessor of that paper meant, wittily, to indicate that the course of truth was full of crosses; but are those all?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Harrison.

"Then we have some defaulters amongst us," resumed Mr. Maitland; "but we must ask no questions."

I therefore now propose ‘Hope,’ as an exercise for our imaginations.”

Another pause, more “pencillings by the way,” and again the “reader’s” task lay before him.

“The prose seems dictated in a poetic spirit,” he observed, as he read the list of definitions of “Hope,” thus :—

- “‘The rainbow of existence.’
- ‘The anchor of the soul in the storms of adversity and trouble.’
- ‘An evergreen, planted in the soil of piety, nourished by the dew of cheerfulness, and warmed by the sun of the future.’
- ‘A cork jacket on the rough waters of life.’
- ‘The Christian’s sunbeam.’
- ‘A useful paint brush.’
- ‘A mental prism.’
- ‘The day-star of the storm-tost mariner.’
- ‘Capital ballast in a *life* boat.’
- ‘A light barque, floating gaily on the billows of existence.’
- ‘The bridge between doubt and reality.’
- ‘The tree which blooms, but never bears fruit.’
- ‘The enlightener of wretchedness.’
- ‘An angel without wings.’
- ‘An indwelling Atlas, bearing our world of cares.’
- ‘A witch, who may practise spells without fear.’
- ‘A tradesman practising two callings.’

This latter requires explanation,” said Mr. Harrison, as he concluded. “I must therefore call upon the author for one. Mr. Harper, is it you?”

“I suppose I must ‘own the soft impeachment,’” said John, “and beg to defend my definition of ‘hope,’ thus : She is of two callings—inasmuch as she is a ‘*Weaver*’ of bright futurities, and a ‘*Gilder*’ of sombre realities.”

“Fairly made out,” said Mrs. Beaumont. “And now, as a little variety to our amusement, let me give you a fair subject for banter. ‘A Bachelor.’”

"Oh ! we'll soon knock him off," laughed George, and pencils went vigorously to work.

"It will be too bad, to make Mr. Harrison pick out all the arrows which are sure to be shot into his *brother bachelor*," said Mrs. Graham, smiling. "I think as my mother set up the target, she should have the task of collecting the shafts of wit."

"Very well, my dear," replied the cheerful old lady, "then pass your *missiles* over to me." The merry party soon handed all their flight of fun to their kind hostess, who thus gave aloud their definition of "a Bachelor :"—

- “A voluntary victim on the altar of selfishness.”
 - ‘A realization of the line “never *is*, but always *to be* blest.”’
 - ‘A cross old chap.’
 - ‘The envy of hen-pecked husbands.’
 - ‘A dear creature, if a solitary specimen in a village.’
 - ‘One who willingly walks blindfolded through the beauties of creation.’
 - ‘The drone of the human hive.’
 - ‘The “pet” of a party.’
 - ‘A bottle of port wine, the older it is, the more *crusty* it becomes, and the less flavour and zest it possesses.’
 - ‘A slippery fish, which is constantly angled for.’
 - ‘A human crab-apple.’
 - ‘A social, sensible fellow.’
 - ‘The moth who frequently sings its wings, when meaning only to play round the flame.’
 - ‘One who in arithmetic never advances beyond number one.’
 - ‘A rotten foundation, on which expectant heirs raise a tottering structure of hope.’
 - ‘A nice man, with his pockets full of presents.’
 - ‘The only real ‘Nobody.’”
- “Well, I think you have not hit the poor bachelor so hard as might have been expected,” said Mr. Harrison. “In the name of ‘the brotherhood’ I thank you.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FETE.—CHRISTMAS TREE.—THE BALLOON.—THE MAGIC CAVE.—THE SUPPER.

EARLY on the following morning the occupants of the “omnibus” were disturbed by George knocking at the door, and upon being admitted, he said, “Come lads, get up, we must draw out our Programme for this evening.”

“Ah !” said John, stretching himself rather lazily,

“The day has dawned, the eventful day,
Big with the fate of *Dobson* and of me,

and so it is high time I got up to meet it !”

Shortly after, the “corps dramatique” were again assembled in the “Cellaret,” in eager consultation and employment, which continued nearly the whole day ; Mr. Maitland being pressed into the service by his youthful friends ; and between five and six o’clock in the evening equipages of various kinds followed each other in rapid succession to the door, and the large saloon, only used on especial occasions, was soon filled by a gay and numerous company.

“We mean to keep ‘old Christmas-day’ this year you see,” said Mrs. Beaumont to a lady seated next to her, “but without the old English customs of ‘Twelfth night.’ We have so many Queens amongst us, that *our* King George would have been puzzled in his choice, and so we have made him remain in regal ‘single blessedness.’ ”

At this moment the two pretty children, Alice, and Charley Maitland, entered the room, carrying fancy baskets adorned with ribbons, and filled with small pieces of paper, neatly folded up like notes, which they presented to each guest in turn, who selected a diminutive missive, and upon opening them, found each one bearing a number, and inscribed with the words,

“Christmas Tree. Prize. No.—”

As soon as all the guests had selected their ticket, the folding doors, at one end of the room, were thrown back, and the youthful party residing and staying at the Grange, were discovered, grouped in front of a most dazzling and beautiful German Christmas Tree, and at the same time a band of music commenced its strains, and their sweet and cheerful voices sung in harmonious concord the following “Invitation :”—

(AIR.—“*Oh ! Summer Night.*”)

“HAIL ! Christmas tree !
So gay to see,
The gifts how rare,
Which deck thy branches fair.
Kind friends are here,
In gala suit,
From far, and near,
To pluck thy fruit.
When o'er thee bending,
Kind voices blending,
To praise thy dazzling light,
And trappings bright ;
Our welcome shall invite them ;
Friends, advance ;
Your rich gifts shall delight them ;
Friends, advance !

“Dear foreign tree !
Thy home shall be,
In happy hearts,
Where joy thy form imparts.
Each brilliant bough,
With offerings deck'd,
Is bending now,
In weight uncheck'd.
Kind tributes bringing,
Sweet odours flinging,
To each dear guest around,
With missive found.
Our welcome shall invite them ;
Friends, advance !
Your glittering gifts delight them ;
Friends, advance !”

As the last notes died away, the group divided, and the guests advanced in succession to the tree. This was composed of a handsome, well-grown young fir, planted in a large tub, elevated upon a round platform, about five feet in diameter, which was covered with a scarlet cloth. The tree was hung with fruit, *bon-bons*, and nick-knacks of all descriptions, and profusely illuminated with coloured-wax lights tied on to the numerous branches. The heavier presents were strewn beneath and around the base, and each being labelled with a corresponding number to those on the tickets, the visitors easily selected their prizes, in gratification and surprise, whilst anon the *bon-bons*, oranges, grapes, &c., also received a vigorous assault.

To make the lottery *amusing*, as well as satisfactory, some of the prizes were of a ludicrous character—thus, for instance, a stout gentleman, with an expansive white waistcoat, was decorated with a child's imitation gold watch. One of the belles of the neighbourhood received a gilt gingerbread husband ! and one of

the grandmamas of the party dandled in her arms a waxen doll ! Long ere the admiration produced by this beautiful "exotic" (as Mrs. Beaumont had called it) had subsided, another surprise awaited the guests. At the back of the Christmas tree a dark curtain hung in massive folds to the ground, before which our young band of choristers again grouped themselves in graceful attitudes, and sung to a well-known lively Scotch air the following words :—

"Come, come, friends of all ages come,
Enter the scene of our pleasing exertion,
Come, come, kindly and quickly come,
Come and assist at our novel diversion.

Girls with the flowing tress,
Boys in your gala dress,
Enter, and gaze on our circle of pleasure ;
Ladies of riper years,
Beaux and gay cavaliers,
See us possessed of our sweet-tasting treasure.
Come, come, &c., &c.,"

"Look ! look ! mark the dark curtain rise,
See our 'Balloon' swinging gaily before ye ;
Look ! look ! how its bright pendant flies,
Telling of triumph, and promising glory :
Enter, and take your stand,
Join in our welcome band,
Fortune sits smiling in glittering bower,
Use well our magic wand,
Strike with a fearless hand,
Gifts shall descend in a plentiful shower !
Come, come, friends of all ages come,
Enter the scene of our pleasing exertion ;
Come, come, kindly and quickly come,
Come and assist at our novel diversion !"

The curtain then drew up, and the much-talked of 'Balloon' appeared. Suspended about eight feet from the ground, by a rope of coloured twist attached to a

large hook in the ceiling, its quarters again and again divided by stripes of various hues, it “swung in mid-air,” an object of admiration and astonishment. Beneath it, on the floor, was spread a snowy covering, and at each corner stood a servant, holding light wands of peeled willow, whilst the flag, to which John’s verses had alluded, floated from the top, and bore the pithy command and promise,

“ Strike, and receive thy guerdon !”

George now advanced, attended by his sisters, and requested a young boy to be blindfolded, that he might begin the game ; and when the bandage was adjusted, the blinded knight was left alone, with one of the willow wands in his right hand.

“ Advance, and strike,” cried George, in a loud voice ; and in obedience to the word of command, the youth stepped forward, and raising his stick, struck forcibly at the balloon. Some of the thin paper which formed the covering of its many hidden compartments was broken by the successful blow, and a shower of sweets, walnuts, and *bon-bons*, fell on the table cloth beneath. Merry and prolonged was the joyous shout with which the spoils were scrambled for by the more youthful spectators, and then another, and another of the guests of either sex was blindfolded, and tried their efforts on the swinging treasury. Some were successful in their first essay, others the reverse, but disappointment proved to the bye-standers a source of as much amusement as success.

When this exercise had been continued for some time, “king George” requested his youthful guests to rest awhile from their labours, whilst some refreshments were handed round.

“ Well, Julia,” said Mrs. Maitland, “ your balloon

was well worth keeping as a ‘surprise ;’ for it is indeed a most pleasing one.”

“I am so glad you like it,” replied Julia ; “but the *little* folks must now sit still a bit, whilst the misses and masters ‘in their teens’ are amused.” She then spoke to Mary, and in a few minutes a smaller curtain, hitherto hanging before one of the old deep bay-windows, was withdrawn, and a brilliant transparency became visible over the recess, bearing the words—

“Here Hamet dwells, the eastern sage,
Who reads the future’s chequer’d page ;
Advance, and learn thy varied lot,
He cheers, or warns, but harms thee not !”

Within the recess sat a venerable-looking man, with flowing beard and locks, attired in an eastern costume, with a snowy turban on his head, and “spectacles on nose.” An antique silver inkstand stood before him, on an old oak table, and a large open volume was spread beneath his hand. Beside him stood a youth in fanciful costume, with negro face and hands, who in good English, but with a thick and muffled utterance, thus invited the approach of the gazing and wondering guests :—

“My master bids me say, that to the favoured friends of her, the generous mistress of this noble house, he will unfold the mysteries of his art, and tell the knowledge culled in distant climes. Approach, and ask the sage thy future lot, nor doubt that Hamet can resolve thy fate !”

Some little hesitation prevailed amongst the company as to who should *first* try the sage’s boasted art ; and, to encourage her guests to the trial, Julia stepped forth, and said, “Ask of thy master what will be the future fate of her who now addresses thee.”

The youth bowed low, and turning to the sage, muttered some words, to those around unintelligible.) Hamet fixed his eyes on the lively girl who sought his boasted skill, then slowly turned the pages of his book, and dipping his pen into the ancient inkstand, inscribed a card with sundry strange characters, which he delivered to his sable attendant. A glance appeared to make *him* acquainted with their meaning, for he instantly read with fluency and emphasis, as follows :—

“ Thy brow is bright, and glad thine eye,
Not e'en the memory of a sigh
Appears to dwell within thy breast ;
And though some clouds may be in store
On thee slight drops of grief to pour,
Yet shalt thou soon again be blest ;
Bright joys there are awaiting thee,
In the far-off fields of time ;
And flow'rets gay shall strew thy way,
When thou hast reached thy prime !”

“ Come,” cried Julia, laughing and blushing, “ I think that is pretty well ; none of you need be discouraged by *my* fate. Now, Mr. Montague,” turning to a young man near her, “ suppose you tax the art of the eastern sage.”

Mr. Montague accordingly stepped forward and asked his future fate, and the youth again received the mystic card, and read aloud :—

“ Like light on the waters, thy destiny's star
Now pointeth to honour and glory afar ;
The song of the minstrel shall honour thy name,
Thy form be enshrined in the temple of fame.”

This response from the Oracle caused great applause, for Mr. Montague was a young officer of great promise, and was shortly expecting to join his regiment, and embark for India.

"Now, Miss Chapman, try your fate," said king George, well knowing that this "cave of destiny" had been her own clever and tasteful design.

"To oblige you, my dear boy, I will," she replied; "but at my age the fate is pretty well known. Now, then, dark youth! ask at your master's hands my future fortune."

As the magic card was placed in the youth's sable hand, a smile showed his white teeth, as he repeated the prediction—

"For many years thou'l lead a single life,
Then prove a happy, prized, and loving wife."

"Bravo! friend Hamet," said George, shaking the blushing Miss Chapman affectionately by the hand. "You hit us all off, what will you say to me?"

After a very brief communication between the venerable man and his interpreter, the latter bent forward in an attitude of earnest meaning, and shaking his forefinger at George, read slowly and distinctly from his card, the warning words:—

"I bid you beware the aspiring eye,
That eagle-like would soar beyond the sky.
Beware that in your learning's wanderings,
You are not dabbling in forbidden things;
You've wit, and talents, mind you're wise as well;
Remember, by ambition, angels fell."

"So much for a hard slap at my *German* education," said George, laughing, but yet wincing a little under the inuendo conveyed.

"Come, Miss Harrison, dare you ask your fortune from so hard-hitting an Oracle?"

"Yes, indeed," she replied, "and put as much faith in it as *you* do. Tell me my fate, good youth," she continued to the page, who, in reply, addressed her thus:—

“ Before the blushing rose of June
 Shall bloom, and shed its rich perfume,
 A grave D. D., with living fair,
 Will in your ear his love declare ;
 A rectory is no bad thing ;
 Pause—e'er away you fortune fling.”

A laugh followed this prediction to the curate's pretty sister, who took the joke good-humouredly, and advised Richard Maitland to consult the sage.

The reply to his obedience was couched in the brief, but pithy sentence—

“ Pursue thy studies, honour and renown
 Wait on thy toils, and will thy labours crown.”

“ Now, Mary, it is *your turn*,” said he, not ill-pleased at the allusion to his own abilities.

The timid girl trembled slightly as she put the required question, and the youth bowed gallantly as he recited the reply :—

“ Gentle art thou, as the dove,
 Pure thou art as wedded love,
 Meek, and trusting is thy heart,
 Within thy breast guile holds no part ;
 As thy character, shall be,
 Fair maid, thy future destiny ;
 Gliding in serenity,
 Through life's changeful scenery !”

Mary retired, blushing, but gratified from the plaudits of her friends, and a dandified youth next entered the charmed circle.

The master and his page consulted the magic book, and the white teeth of the latter were again visible as he read—

“ You'll flirt and you'll flatter,
 By word and by look,
 Reach the wise age of fifty,
 And marry your cook !”

"It serves you quite right, Mr. Thorpe," said a young lady. "Tell me *my* fortune, good youth; you have good in store for me, I hope."

The book was turned, the card was written, and the words were read:—

"Don't flirt any more,
Or I'm sadly afraid
You'll repent it at last,
And die an old maid."

"A very fair '*tit for tat*,' my dear, I think," said Mrs. Beaumont, who watched the amusement with great pleasure. "Now, Mr. Smithson, ask advice on *your* future career."

"Oh! I mean to be Lord Chancellor of England," replied the young man, smiling; "shall I not be?" he asked the sable page.

"Listen," he replied:—

"In foreign climes go seek for fortune's smile,
Twould be denied thee in thy native Isle."

"Well, if I must go, I must," resumed the querist; "will *you* go with me, Miss Elliot?"

"I must ask the Oracle," replied the lady.

"No," replied the youth,

"Resist all offers to forsake thy home,
A foreign land would prove thy early tomb."

"It matters little where we live, I think," remarked the stout gentleman who had obtained the incongruous prize of the child's gilt watch, "*home* is *home*. A pleasant circle and a cheerful fire, and *place* or climate signify but little. Have you such gifts in store for me, good youth?"

Who would have thought such cheerful aspirations would meet the chill response—

“Alas ! for thee ! thou’lt lead a joyless life,
Unblest by children or a loving wife ;
Thy home uncheer’d by sweet domestic mirth,
Thou’lt sit beside ‘a Bachelor’s’ cold hearth.”

“Never mind him, Mason,” laughed a friend, “the sage is evidently getting crusty. I think he wants his supper.”

“What ! my dear girl,” cried Mrs. Maitland, as her daughter Jessie advanced to the recess, “dare you risk some stern decree of Fate ?”

“Yes, mamma,” she replied, “I am not afraid ; Julia and Mary both beg I will follow their example. What is my fortune, youth of the mystic speech ?”

“Your face is your fortune—pshaw ! Pardon me, fair maiden, I will ask my master.....*He* bids me say :—

‘Red is the rose and beautiful,
Yet of prickly thorns is full.
The sunflower lifts its gaudy head,
As if applause it merited.
A modest violet thou ; the flower
Man loves to place within his bower ;
Humility its own best guard,
From harm to shield, from storms to ward !’”

“The reverend Hamet seems rather less irate than he was,” remarked Mr. Barnes ; “I think I may venture to inquire my fate ; but if he declares that *I* am always to ‘sit in silent solitude,’ like my predecessor, I shall be ready to pull his beard.”

A longer consultation than formerly followed his appeal to the sage, which, had it been intelligible to the company, would have seemed rather out of keeping with the foreign books and habits of the pair within.

“I’ll tell you what, uncle, I can’t stand this any

longer," said the *sable* youth. "I am nearly dead with heat, behind this detestable mask."

"And as for me, John, I must get rid of this beard and wig," said the *Eastern* sage. "Time may not 'thin my flowing locks,' unless we make a determination on the subject. Tell these good people 'Hamet is fatigued, and the Book of Fate shut up.'"

"We *must* give poor Barnes his answer," remarked the *page*.

"Well, he wants to be married, he says, so give him this card, to insure him a good appetite for his supper, and then shut up the shop."

Those who had witnessed this long colloquy, listened with more than common attention as the youth addressed Mr. Barnes :—

"Hark! to the news I now can bring;
Horses, a carriage, and a wedding ring;
A fair, a lovely, and a virtuous bride;
Fortune is coming on, with rapid stride,
Amid her smiles, remember she may change,
She's like yourself, a *little* given to range."

Before the laugh with which this was received had subsided, the messenger spoke again :—

"Hamet now bids you all a kind farewell,
He seeks repose in hospitable cell."

And at a signal from the youth the curtain was drawn, and the recess veiled from the sight of the guests.

Supper was now announced, and the company descended to the old banqueting room, where plenty and elegance had combined to load the boards. The previous amusements of the evening formed fruitful topics of conversation ; and Mr. Maitland and John being *at last* found amongst the guests, the imper-

sonators of the eastern sage, and his interpreter, were recognised and applauded for their efforts.

"We grew *very warm* in your cause, I can assure you," said John, perpetrating an old joke; "but I could stand it no longer, otherwise we had some more 'caps' ready made 'to fit the heads' which presented themselves."

"Now, my dear, good lad, refresh yourself," said Mrs. Beaumont, "you have other labours to go through. My young folks," she continued, addressing her guests, "have kindly got up a dramatic representation, as the *finale* to our evening's entertainments, and after supper the theatre will be opened."

When the elegant and substantial repast had been done ample justice to, the company were conducted through the mazy windings of the old passages, now lighted by sconces and lamps, to the spacious hall, where rows of seats were ranged before a curtain of green baize, and a handsome pendant chandelier shed brilliancy upon the expectant throng.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FETE CONTINUED.—THE DRAMATISED PROVERB.—THE
SUCCESSFUL GUESS.—GENERAL BON SOIR.

THE company being all seated in front of the green curtain, Tom, who according to his request had been made into a *supernumerary* of the dramatic corps (and was attired in the dress of a *stage* footman), went round

the circle, and distributed some very neat play-bills, containing the following announcement :—

Theatre Royal, Fernvale.

ON FRIDAY EVENING, JANUARY 6TH, 18—,

WILL BE PRESENTED

AN ACTED PROVERB.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

<i>Madam Dobson</i>	Miss Harper.
<i>The Countess Von Schlossinpoole</i>	Miss Graham.
<i>Martha Brown</i>	Miss Susan Harper.
<i>Nancy</i> (her daughter)	Miss Maitland.
<i>Justine</i> (a French waiting maid).....	Miss Mary Graham.

<i>Count Von Schlossinpoole</i>	Mr. Graham.
<i>Squire Dobeon</i>	Mr. Harper.
<i>William Brown</i>	Mr. Richard Maitland.
<i>Alexis</i>	Miss Agnes Maitland.

Doors open at eleven o'clock—performance to commence at a quarter past eleven.

Soon after the distribution of these bills, a bell rung, and the curtain, slowly rising, discovered

SCENE I.—*An apartment in the old Moat House.*

The SQUIRE and his DAME, quaintly attired, seated on each side of the fire-place.

Squire. Well, Molly my love, this is a sad blow, having to part with our dear girl to a moustachioed, frog-eating foreigner !

Madam Dobson. Ah ! I little thought it when he was brought here by Sir John Meadows, or I'd have seen him hanged before he should have slept in the best bed !

Squire. Well, "*what can't be cured, must be endured;*" let us hope our dear Mary has married a good husband, though he does live in such an outlandish place.

Madam D. Yes, I hope he'll be kind to her now they're gone to Germany, for Mary was a sweet, precious creature, that she was.

Squire. It was a curious thing that he should come at all ; if it had not been for that tremendous storm, Sir John Meadows would have taken him straight up to the hall, and we should never have seen him.

Dame [energetically]. I wish we had *not* : perhaps I shall never see our Mary again !

Squire. Come, come, wife, this won't do ; the Count said as plainly as he could in his broken English, that he should "*lub always de great shtorms of Inkerlandt,*" so he did not regret our meeting.

Dame. Ah ! but he got a beautiful young bride by the "*shtorm,*" as he called it—he had no cause to grumble—we have.

Squire. Nay, nay, Dame, do not speak so rash, "*least said, soonest mended;*" we had better not abuse our fine Countship of a son-in-law, he may be of use to us some day. If we cannot find your grandfather's will, and your uncle should die who has never disputed *your* right to the estate of Moat House, the next heir will be "*grasping Gregory,*" as your cousin is well named, and he might turn us out at any time, and make us glad to live with Count Schlossinpoole, as he asked us to do.

Dame [weeping]. I hope that day will never come ;

there *must* be a will somewhere ; my poor old grandfather always said he should leave the old house to me, and old Sharpe, the lawyer, said he had made a will, but could not tell what was done with it.

Squire. Well, my dear, we must hope on ; dry your tears, and let us go out for a walk. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*The interior of a Cottage—Martha discovered knitting a stocking—Nancy employed in household duties.*

Enter WILLIAM, with spade, &c., on his shoulder, which he lays down in a corner.

William. Well, wife—well, Nancy, how are you both ? eugh ! but I'm tired, and that's truth ! it's no joke tramping home four miles in such weather as this !

[*sits down.*]

Martha. No, poor soul, it isn't, indeed ! it does blow, above a bit ! It has been much such a day as when you and I were married, William ; it is twelve years this very day.

William. Bless me, Martha, why so it is ! and our young lady was married the same day. Dear ! dear ! what changes there have been, to be sure, since then ! To think that old Master and Missus should have had to turn out of their old house, just for want of her grandfather making a *Will*.

Nancy [*bringing her father some supper*]. How was it, father, that there ever was any dispute about Madam Dobson having the property ?

Martha. I can't tell you child. I ben't no lawyer ; but it was something about sonship, and heirship. Weren't it, William ?

William. It was this, you see, Martha ; our missus's father died before *his* father (when she was quite a

little un), and so unless the old master *willed* the Moat House to his granddaughter, it went to his eldest son and *his* children.

Martha. Ah ! and as long as her uncle lived he left her peaceable, for he had plenty of money, and a fine estate, without turning his poor niece out of the house in which she was born and bred.

Nancy. Then whose fault is it now ?

William. Why, "Grasping Gregory's," as he is called ; a Mr. Jenkins, who married the only daughter of this kind uncle ; *he* has got a son, and won't give nothing away that he can keep. If there *was* but a *Will* !

Martha. Well, it's a shame, and so it is—of course Mr. Dobson meant to leave this property to his granddaughter. What did he marry her to her cousin for, but that the old family seat, and the old family name might go together ? Why, it has been Dobson of the Moat House, time out of mind !

Nancy. Oh ! mother, mother, do listen to the wind and rain ! is it not dreadful ?

William. Aye, Nancy, your mother, and our young lady at the Moat House, have both to thank such weather as this for getting them good husbands ; so look out my dear, who knows but you may have equal good luck.

Nancy. You must have your joke, father, but I *have* heard mother say, that if you had not been so patient under the pain of the broken arm you got when that great tree fell, she would not have had you.

William. Hark ! is that only the wind howling ? or is it any one calling ? [listens.]

[*Voice without.* Help—holloa—holloa.]

[*William opens the door, which is almost driven in by the storm ; shouts in reply ; a party enter,*

consisting of a lady and gentleman, a little boy, and a female attendant, all apparently half drenched with rain, and much fatigued. Martha and Nancy help them off with some of their cloaks, &c. Lady speaks aside to the gentleman, and then addresses Martha in a slightly foreign accent.]

Lady. My good woman, we must on you intrude for room to sleep in to-night.

Martha [in alarm]. Eh ! Madam ! we have not got a room for the likes of *you*.

Boy. Dear mamma, we can lie down on the floor—any where but stop in the carriage.

Maid. Ah ! Madame—quel horreur ! to sleep in dis littel chambre !

[*Nancy whispers her mother, and goes up stairs. Gentleman again speaks aside to his wife, who turns to Martha.*]

Lady. Go you to your bed, we will sit down here till morning.

[*Nancy comes down stairs and goes to Lady.*]

Nancy [curtseying]. If you please, ma'am, you and Miss here [*curtseying to the maid, who curtsies in return*] can sleep in mother's bed, and the gentleman and the little boy can have mine.

Lady. Thank you *ver* much, we will not forget your kindness ; [*they go upstairs.*]

William. Why, Martha ! that's our young lady, I do believe, and her husband and son !

Martha. Heart alive ! William, I do think you're right ; but she spoke so *furrin*, like, and would not raise her veil ; and he has never spoke at all, and has kept up his fur collar, so that what with that and his moustachios, I could not make him out.

Nancy. Is that a real German Count ? Dear ! he's very like an English Captain, only more hairy !

Martha. Well, come, child, and you, husband, let us go and lie down on the clean straw we've just got in to the back room, ready for thatching our old cottage anew.

William. Ah ! we should never have persuaded old Smith to have had it done, if it had been as mild a spring as last year. [Exit.]

SCENE III.—*Part of the interior of a room at the old Moat House—some of the outer wall blown down—the wainscot torn down in places—fragments of broken furniture, &c., the whole looking ruinous and wretched.*

Enter SQUIRE and MADAM DOBSON, each more aged—he with a stick, she wearing spectacles—they stand in sad grief and surprise.

Dame. Well-a-day ! Well-a-day ! to think that ever I should see this day ! my grandfather's old room nearly knocked to pieces ! his arm-chair broken ! his picture fallen down ! oh ! dear ! oh dear ! my heart will surely break. [Cries, and wrings her hands.]

Squire. Come, Molly, my dear wife, cheer up. I would not have let you come, if I had thought you would have taken on so.

Dame. Ah ! it is like our fortunes now ! well may my kind grandfather's chair be broken, when a stranger to his heart and name is to sit in it. Well may his picture fall, when one whom he loved so well is to be thrust from his door by an upstart like that Gregory Jenkins !

Squire [looking round on hearing a noise]. Dear ! dear ! who are all these people coming in with William, and Martha Brown, I wish they had not brought strangers to the old place, when they knew we were here !

[Enter party of last night, William, &c., &c.]

William [bowing]. I beg your pardon, Squire,

but this lady and gentleman be *furriners*, and want just to look about this old place for a sight, like. [Aside.]—I wonder if he'll know 'em.

Squire. They have as much right here, William, as we have now, [sighs] but still I wish they had not come to-day.

Alexis [*goes up to Madam Dobson*]. If you please, ma'am, may I run about just where I like in this funny old place?

Dame. Bless your sweet face, child; yes, but come back, let me look at you again [*agitated*]. Dear! dear, how like he is to our darling Mary!

Squire [*starting*].—Eh! what! so he is! why, child—speak—whose little boy are you?

[*Count and Countess advance to the old couple, and each seize a hand.*]

Countess. Our boy, dear father! your grandchild, my dearest mother!—we came from Germany on purpose to see you in the dear old house again; and to stay with you in happy England for some months.

Dame [*wceeping and kissing her daughter*]. We have so longed to see you, my darling! and now you are really come, we have no home to welcome you to.

Squire [*mournfully*]. It is too true, Mary, the Count and you have now two poor old outcasts for your parents!

Count. Den, il faut que vous reviendrez avec nous. You vil lib vid me and my wife, she is goot wife, she is goot moder, she sall be goot dochtor!

Alexis [*laughing and jumping about*]. Oh! yes, grandmamma, I shall so like to have you, and this funny old gentleman in our old *Schloss*. I love England, and I always speak English; but I like Germany too. [Dances about, and in so doing tumbles over a

broken chair, and cries out. They all run to look for him, but he has disappeared.]

Countess [in alarm]. Alexis, mon cher fils, darling, mein leibling ! Oh ! ou êtes vous ? where are you ? Speak ! Sprich ein mal ! I shall die if my boy is lost !

Justine [screams]. Oh ! le mignon ! le tres cher enfant ! il est perdu ! vere you put yoursel monsieur Alexis ? Oh ! ma foi ! mais c'est terrible !!

Nancy. Don't stand crying and making a noise, Miss, but help to look for the young gentleman. [Pulling the thing : aside.]

Count. Mein kind, 'mien sōhn,' sp̄-ich ein mal.

Countess [calls]. Alexis ! Alexis !

Alexis. [in a faint voice]. I'm here, dear mother, all in the dark.

[William, Martha, and the rest begin moving about the rubbish, find a large hole in the panne' of the wainscot, break more away, and all go through.]

SCENE IV.—*A small room like a closet, very dark ; the people all grope about with their hands, until William calls out.*

William. Stand still, all of you ; I think I feel a shutter. There ; hurra ! there's some light for us ; now we shall see what we are about. [Pulls aside an old shutter, and discovers the inside of the room, in which stands an old oak chest, with a rusty bunch of keys hanging in the lock.]

Dame [in amazement]. I never knew of this room before in my life ! what can it have been used for ?

Squire. Let us open the chest. [Turns the lock with some difficulty.]

Alexis [putting his hand in]. Oh ! grandpapa, here

is nothing in the chest but this old piece of parchment.
[*holds it up.*]

Squire [*snatching it, and opening it hastily.*]. Why, goodness ! Molly, look here ! it is *your grandfather's Will!*

Dame [*eagerly.*]. Oh ! read it Richard, read it. Who has he left the old house to ?

Squire [*murmurs over part to himself, then reads aloud.*], "I give and bequeath to my dear granddaughter, Mary, the child of my beloved son, John Dobson, the estate and manor of the Moat House, for herself and heirs for ever."

William. Hurra ! hurra !

Dame [*crying with joy.*]. Then, dear Mary, you and your darling boy *have* got an English home, after all.

Countess. Well, dearest mother, and we will gratefully share it with you sometimes, for if we had not brought this mischievous boy to see the tumble-down house of his ancestors, we should never have found the Will in this unheard-of place.

Count. It is always de great shtorms of Inkerlandt dat brings de good luck !

Martha [*curtseying.*]. So say I, my lord, for they got my young lady a good husband, and me not a *bad* one.

Squire. Well, let us all go down to the Inn, in the village, and talk over our plans for the future. I think, from all that has happened, we may agree in the truth of the old proverb, which [*turning and bowing to the audience.*] our friends here have most probably guessed ere this.

[*Curtain falls.*]

"Admirable!" "very good!" "what can it be?" were some of the expressions heard on the conclusion of the piece.

"Come, come, Maitland, you know all about it, of course," remarked Mr. Mason of *the watch*; "tell us what the proverb is."

"Indeed," replied Mr. Maitland, "I am as much in the dark as yourself; but I will give a guess. How must we summon one of the *Dramatis Personæ*?" turning to Miss Chapman.

"Thus," she answered, applying a small silver whistle to her lips, in obedience to whose shrill call, "Squire Dobson" stood again before the audience.

"I am requested to ask whether your 'Acted Proverb' was that of 'Where there's a *mill* there's a Way?'" observed Mr. Maitland, standing up and addressing John.

"It was *not* sir," replied the "Squire," with a bow, and again retired.

"I say, Cameron," said Mr. Barnes, in a low and half apologetic tone, to his young friend, "here's a pretty go; that stupid man of mine has brought my pony with the saddle on, instead of putting him in the gig. I fear you must walk home."

"No, no," said kind Mrs. Beaumont, who overheard the conversation, "your friend must stay here to-night. It will be but putting one more into the omnibus."

"If my man had not been so thoughtless and stupid, you would not have had the pleasure of being Mrs. Beaumont's guest, James," said Mr. Barnes; "you see, 'it is an ill wind that blows no one any good.'"

"That's *it*, Barnes, that's *it*," cried Cameron, in delight, and hitting his friend a hearty slap on the back."

"That's *what*, James?" he asked, in amazement and slight *pain*, from his friend's enthusiasm."

"The proverb, the proverb, man. Here Miss Chapman, call your friend the Squire—'Whistle, and *he'll* come to you,' or lend it to me, will you?" and receiving

the tiny instrument from her hands, he blew it so long, so loud and shrilly, that the *curtain* rose again, and the whole of “the company” stood arrayed before a pretty drop scene, to hear why they were thus summoned. Mr. Maitland spoke :—

“ Noble Countess, gentle Dame, fair Count, and honest Squire, and you, good yeoman, with your comely wife ; we’ve called you here once more, before your sympathizing friends, to hear our hearty congratulations, and receive our thanks. The happy *denouement* to all your varied ills has proved to our satisfaction, as *you wished* it should, that

‘It is an ill wind that blows no one any good.’

And for the admirable manner in which it has been represented, I beg, in the name of the whole *house*, to thank you most sincerely.”

A hearty clapping of hands, and rounds of applause, followed this address ; and “the manager” then said, “In the name of myself and ‘company,’ I thank you for your indulgence and your praise. The happy results which have attended our efforts, prove that in performing *one* proverb we have realized another :—

“ All’s well that ends well.”

The dramatic group then made a respectful obeisance, and the curtain *finally* fell for the evening.

The guests now began to depart, all highly pleased with the diversity and novelty of their evening’s entertainment, and Mrs. Beaumont gave a *verbal* invitation to a few of her most intimate acquaintance, to come on Tuesday to a little party she contemplated, in *quite* a different style. As the last carriage drove from the door, her daughter and grandchildren insisted upon her immediately retiring to rest.

“Kiss me, my darlings,” said the amiable old lady.
“Shake hands, my friends. It will be allowable to be half an hour later at breakfast to-morrow :—

‘To each and all a fair good night,
And pleasant dreams, and slumbers light.’”

“Hollo ! old chap,” cried John, as James Cameron joined them ; “what, you are for the *Bus*, are you ? Well, ‘King George,’ here is *Monsieur le Conducteur*, so you must *tip* him to let you come in.”

“Now lads,” said George, prudently, as they arrived at their *exalted* situation, “pray don’t talk any more to-night. I am sure we have all done enough of that for *one* evening ; and as for John, I should think he has not another ‘word to throw at a dog.’”

“My dear fellow, I could not even ‘say *bo* to a goose,’ ” replied John, yawning, “so pray *don’t ask* me. Good night. Shut the door Conductor, and drive on, Morpheus.”

CHAPTER X.

PERILOUS PLEASURES.—MISS CHAPMAN’S DIARY.—CHRISTMAS TREES IN SILESIA.—ST. GEORGE’S HALL AT ST. PETERSBURG.

A MERRY, talking, laughing, getting-up was that of the next morning ! and in each room the occupants had so much to say, and to *do*, in their recapitulations of last night’s amusements, that the breakfast-bell rung twice its cheerful summons ere the oak parlour received its complement of guests.

“Now, dear granny,” said Mary, anxiously, “you must be very quiet to-day.”

"I think a sledging down to Ferndale this bright morning would be quite refreshing," returned her grandmother. "You know I hope to have *another* party on Tuesday, but as some of my principal wished-for guests have not received their invitation, I wish to take it in person."

"Who is granny alluding to?" said Julia, wonderingly; "I have no idea!"

"All in good time," replied her grandmother, enjoying their astonishment; "when I know if my guests can come, I will consult with my young councillors as to the best mode of amusing them."

After breakfast the parties divided, Mrs. Beaumont taking Mrs. Maitland, Miss Chapman, and Mr. Cameron with her.

"If you please, dear granny, not to be gone more than an hour and a half," pleaded George, "for we wish to take Cameron down the hills, and I want Ivān to help me to show off some of the 'perilous pleasures' which Mr. Maitland deprecates."

"We will do our best to oblige you," replied his indulgent relative; and she called to her northern coachman, as soon as they were all seated, "P'skerrai, Ivān, na zāt se chas," (Make haste, Ivān, come back very soon), in so lively a tone, that the Russian, who had learned to love his English mistress for her constant and thoughtful kindness, took off his picturesque cap with both his hands, and bowed his head with an almost reverential feeling at the cheerful spirit of his aged lady.

"Sloushi soudarina," (I hear, madam), he said, and, in obedience to her wishes, his beautiful horses started off at full speed, and bore them rapidly on their road towards Ferndale.

Until the return of the sledge party, all pursued

different amusements ; and when Ivān was at liberty to attend his young master's commands, a numerous section of the party accompanied "King George" to the scene of his intended exploits ; and after he had acted as charioteer to some of the ladies, taken James Cameron down *properly* twice, and thus entrapped him into a third ride, in which he indulged his inclination of *victimizing* a novice, he called to Ivān to come and show off some of the modes in which this exhilarating, but sometimes dangerous sport, may be pursued. The sledges being again placed side by side, George and the Russian took their station on them in the various postures of kneeling, lying flat on their back, and, going head-foremost ; and, as a *finale* to their extraordinary and well-named "perilous pleasure," they descended *closely side by side*, with each an arm thrown over the other's back, and shooting off with great rapidity, maintained their curious *interlacement* to the end of their icy road. This feat called forth great admiration, but it was not unmixed with fear, and Mr. Maitland joined the frightened females in requesting it might not be repeated.

"This amusement must be particularly gay in St. Petersburg, I should think," observed Cameron.

"Yes," replied George, "the variety of costume gives an effect to the scene, which the mere coats and round hats of Englishmen never can, but yet strange to say, the 'English' hills, as they are termed (meaning those belonging exclusively to the British residents in Petersburg) are always better made, and more thronged than any of the *native* ones, and more dangerous exploits performed at them."

"Except during 'the Butter week,' as it is called," said Mary, "when the shows are all erected on the fine Isaac's plain, and the 'Ice hills' are crowded from

morning till night with the *mujiks* and the country women."

In the evening the conversation about the amusements of the previous day was resumed, and after the guests had reiterated their admiration at the appearance of the Christmas tree, Mrs. Graham said, "We saw one of these pretty devices each year that we were abroad ; and my dear mother resolved the first winter we returned to England she would transplant the 'exotic' with her, but we have not followed our example in every respect. They are in Germany and other countries carried to a much greater extent."

"The first we attended, if you remember, dear madam, was at the Count Kiesselwasser's," said Miss Chapman, "near Breslaw."

"Yes, and I recollect, my good friend, that you made a copious entry in your amusing journal of the events of the evening," returned Mrs. Graham. "Suppose, as our minds really require some rest this evening, as well as our bodies, that you were to oblige us by reading it aloud. Some of our friends may not be familiar with the mode of keeping Christmas in Germany."

Miss Chapman being eagerly pressed to comply with this request, went up stairs for the volume of manuscript desired, and on her return, the happy party drew closer round the cheerful fire, and listened to her entertaining narrative.

"Being one of the guests invited to celebrate Christmas Eve at B....., I went, resolved to make the best use of my eyes, in what I knew would be to me a perfectly novel scene. We found the whole of the family assembled at the Chateau ; children, grandchildren, uncles, aunts, and cousins, of all ages, and from far and near. At six o'clock, the company were

all requested to go down stairs, to the room in which the presents were to be given ; to most of those present this move was productive of no surprise, whatever it might have been of pleasure, but on my mind it produced both, as the house is so large, and so old, that a mere walk through its rambling passages and ancient chambers seems to open whole pages of by-gone history to one's imagination. Down went the guests in 'orderly disorder.' The Count and his elder children ; the Colonel of the eldest son's regiment ; papas and mammas ; the nurses, with infants in their arms, with the seven little ones who could walk ; uncles, aunts, and guests, *pèle mêle* down we went into a room reserved for such *fêtes*. The walls were painted light blue, with large figures on them, shaded to represent statues in reliefo, with a handsome ceiling in stucco. Down the centre extended a table nearly the length of the room, on which were seven Christmas trees ! these were hung with walnuts, apples, raisins, and sundry other eatables ; bits of coloured and white wax tapers, about the size of a little finger, were stuck in the branches, and on each side of the tree, lines were chalked on the table, dividing it into compartments. In this was also chalked the name of the grandchild for whom the tree was destined, and each division was filled with a profusion of toys ; and a wax taper also burned in a little *tin* candlestick, for each child. Against the walls of the room were also ranged tables, and at one, near the entrance, sat the Countess. As we entered the room my eye fell with interest upon a fair girl whom I had previously observed up stairs ; a sympathetic feeling evidently prevailed between us ; she looked hard at me, and smiled ; it touched a chord of *national* feeling. I spoke a few words at a venture in *English*, and to my

delight found I was correct, and that she was my countrywoman ! A few words explained all ; she was the English governess in the family ; from that moment she was my companion for the evening, and I enjoyed the scene with twofold zest and pleasure. As we stood close to the Countess, she said to my friend, '*a la droite* Miss A.' but she did not hear her, and that side being much thronged by persons surrounding the children, we turned to the left instead. Here, against the wall, were all the presents arranged for the *sous*—stocks, waistcoats, gloves, perfumery, &c. ; it was like a bazaar. At this moment the Count came up to my friend, and politely said 'Vous n'avez pas encore trouvée votre place *Miss*.' Miss A., like myself, had been too much absorbed by the novelty of the scene to have thought of herself, but she now followed the kind Count round to the other side of the room. We paused in our progress to give another glance at the children ; who each seated in a chair at the table, were hugging their dolls, munching, crunching, feeding, and stuffing to their hearts' content. Arrived at the table on the right-hand side, we found the centre occupied by the Christmas tree of my friend's pupil, lighted up similarly to the others ; whilst on each side were the presents intended for Miss A. and the *German* governess. It was not an elegant style of illumination which designated their possessions, being what is there termed a wax stock, in England a *twirl*, such as we see in the windows of oilmen ; and their names being stuck on with a *pin*. The effect was extraordinary of all these wax lights illumined at once ; the gay colour of the walls, the varied number of the *cadeaux*, the sweetmeats, *bonbons*, and toys. Most of the party, when they had eaten enough, practised economy, and put out their lights. Not so

my fair friend ; she obliged both me and herself by allowing the huge wax taper to burn on, until her neighbour extinguished hers ! Pretty, useful, and numerous, were the presents she had received, and when, following the example of her German companion, she wished to carry them off to her own room, a basket was requisite to hold them all. A goodly store there was of nick-nacks and eatables ! and a choice candlestick, with the proper taper burning in it, to light them to her store. I helped to fill her basket with the cakes, apples, gingerbread, sweetmeats, almonds, raisins, *bonbons*, and chocolate. The trees were beginning to be stripped of their tempting fruit, the lights burnt down to the branches, and as my friend quitted the room with her basket on her arm, a gilt inkstand in one hand, and her china candlestick in the other, the beauty of the scene seemed all gone, and I exclaimed, with a sigh, ‘*sic transit gloria mundi !*’”

A unanimous burst of thanks and admiration ensued upon Miss Chapman here shutting her book, but Mrs. Beaumont said, “We have not *quite* satisfied our demands upon that entertaining volume, my dear ; for, if I mistake not, there are some notes respecting the celebration of this interesting ceremony at the Imperial court of Russia.”

“The description of the *room* in which the Christmas trees are arranged, is from my personal survey, but the ceremonial itself from mere hearsay,” replied Miss Chapman.

“Well, give us the benefit of both, if you please,” said Mrs. Maitland ; and Miss Chapman, re-opening her MS., said, “I will not trouble you with the description of the whole of the magnificent suite of state rooms in ‘the Winter Palace,’ which we saw at the time of the splendid spectacle of ‘blessing the

water,' as it is called, but will read the few concluding remarks I made on the occasion :—

"From thence (the Salle de Marechaux, hung round with portraits of the Marshalls engaged in the allied army against France) our polite friends conducted us to the splendid 'Hall of St. George,' an apartment reserved expressly for state receptions, and not shown to casual visitors. The official character of Monsieur M., as one of the 'Aides-de-camp's' at court, procured us this favour.

"This magnificent apartment has the beautiful white polished walls and pillars, similar to those we had previously admired in 'la salle blanche,' which are relieved by recesses lined with crimson velvet, in which stand exquisite statues; whilst splendid mirrors in alternate compartments, reflect and repeat the chaste elegance of the whole.

"At one end of this apartment is raised a throne of elegant design and richly gilt workmanship, surmounted by a crimson velvet canopy, trimmed with deep gold fringe; on the same coloured velvet, at the back, is a most exquisite small *alto reliefo* of St. George and the dragon; the body of the monster is composed entirely of emeralds, some of them of enormous size, and its eyes are formed of diamonds. The white steed of the knight is made of dead silver, and his armour and the horse's accoutrements are profusely studded with precious stones. Madame M. told me that it was valued altogether at the large sum of £30,000 sterling!"

"So far for my own personal observation," continued Miss Chapman; "here," referring to another part of her book, "is what a friend told me about the use this splendid room is annually devoted to :—

"On Christmas eve separate small tables are

arranged in the magnificent 'Hall of St. George,' bearing the different Christmas trees designed for the emperor's children, which are always adorned with great variety of most elaborate French confectionary and *bonbons*, whilst around the base of each tree are laid the various *cadeaux*.

"Those from the Emperor to the *Naslednik*, or Cæsarivitch (as the eldest son is alternately called), consist principally of jewelry, and increase in value and brilliancy each year."

Miss Chapman here closed her book, and again received the thanks of the whole party, for the amusement and instruction it had afforded.

CHAPTER XI.

PROPOSAL FOR A SCHOOL TREAT.—THE TETE-A-TETE INTERRUPTED.—FRENCH AND ENGLISH CHARADES.—ENIGMATICAL DINNER.

"I MUST now request, my friends, that you will give me your attention first, and your advice afterwards, upon a matter of some little importance," said Mrs. Beaumont, rising from the breakfast-table on Monday morning, and taking possession of her own *particular* arm-chair. "You have all been so politely observant of my desire for silence on the subject, that I mean now to reward you by a full disclosure of my plans and wishes."

The party, one and all, promised their attention and assistance.

"I wish to give a treat to-morrow to the senior children of our Ferndale school," she resumed, "and having satisfactorily arranged with Mr. Biddulph, the master, and Miss Capper, the mistress, for the required holiday being allowed, it only remains to decide what amusements will be best for the children to join in."

"The balloon might be repaired," suggested Mrs. Maitland, "if not to look quite so gay as on Friday evening."

"Very well," returned Mrs. Beaumont, "we will set some of our young ladies to work with gum and tissue paper; perhaps Susan will prove that her acquaintance with *Fraulien Nymbulhande*, has given her a right to the same designation."

Susan blushed and smiled, and promised to do her best.

"Miss Capper has taken a good deal of pains with the girls' singing, by my particular desire," continued Mrs. Beaumont, "and some of the boys also have good voices and some knowledge of music; so that if our clever friend John, here, will kindly arrange some new words to any popular air, in which a chorus will be effective, I think it will form a pleasing variety during the evening."

"I will retire into the *Cellaret*, and court the muses this afternoon," replied John, "and perhaps at the tea-table I may be able to tell you, dear madam, if my suit has been successful. But I must have something more encouraging than mere bare walls to recite my ditties to, so Mary, you must kindly come about half an hour hence, and bring the guitar with you, that we may try an *effect* or two."

Mary promised to oblige him, and then her grand-mamma continued her arrangements.

"You now see for what I wanted your theatre, my

dears," she said ; " it is to be turned into a regular play-room at one period of the evening, and converted into a '*salle à manger*' at another."

" We have been holding a council of six, grand-mamma, with Mrs. Maitland for our president," said George, advancing from one of the large bay windows, " and we have drawn up this *programme* for your inspection and sanction ;" and he displayed a paper to Mrs. Beaumont, which she perused with much satisfaction.

" Now, where is Ivān and his axe ?" cried George ; " he is a clever fellow, and uses this *national* implement in a most extraordinary way. We must knock up a sort of *dais*, granny, for you and the other grandees to sit upon, whilst the 'little folks below' are running and tumbling about ; so good-bye till dinner time. Come, lads, leave the young ladies to their own devices for an hour or two."

The seniors found plenty of employment and entertainment, and the girls were busily engaged in repairing the balloon, and putting in a quantity of common nuts and walnuts, to supply the place of the more *rare* eatables, which had been abstracted and demolished.

" I wonder how John and Mary are getting on in the 'cellaret,'" said Julia. " I should like to take a peep at them, so stick this piece of paper on, and then come with me."

Passing quickly along the mazy windings of the long passages, the mirthful girls at length stole quietly into the old hall ; but they almost feared their jesting errand would prove fruitless, when at the farther end they observed George and his three male companions busily directing and assisting Joseph and Ivān in the movement and arrangement of divers boards, which now and then fell on the floor with rather a startling

noise, not propitious to the process of "composition," which they supposed was being carried on within the little cell. Thither, however, they crept quietly, as they saw the door was ajar, and Julia and Susan first approaching it, heard John in a most emphatic tone making the inquiry—

"And say, when summoned from the world and thee,
I lay my head beneath the willow tree,
Wilt *thou*, sweet mourner! at my stone appear,
And soothe my parted spirit ling'ring near?"

"He can never be going to arrange *those* words to music!" whispered Julia, and peeping in, she saw John comfortably seated in an old arm-chair, with his feet upon the fender of the stove, whilst opposite to him sat Mary, the guitar hanging listlessly by her side, and her looks fastened upon John's face, who held a book in his left hand, and kept his right one waving and swaying in emphatic gesture.

"That is what you call 'courting the muses,' is it?" laughed Julia. "Pray which is the *chorus* we are all to sing?"

"Oh! we have written that, and sung it, and approved it," returned John, rallying his courage, "and thus having done our work, we thought it no harm to indulge in some of 'The pleasures of Hope,' for the satisfactory conclusion to our trouble. But, I say, is not dinner ready? for I am getting voraciously hungry," and so saying, he put his book in his pocket, and ran off to prepare for the expected meal.

When the usual evening *gathering* took place, John and Mary were both quizzed for their sly method of procuring a *tête à tête*, but they defended themselves so cleverly and good-humouredly, that Mrs. Beaumont called "a *truce*," and proposed some species of amusement for the party.

"I should like a hit or two at backgammon," she said, "if Mr. Maitland will indulge an old woman. Miss Chapman, attack your friend Richard at chess; I hear he is an adept. Come, my friends, what will the rest of you do?"

"We have been very idle lately, granny," returned Julia, "so we will work a little, and make these young gentlemen amuse us by giving us some charades or puzzles."

"I have some very good charades, fair Julia," said John, "which I will fetch from my room;" and in a short time he had again seated himself by her side, with a *porte feuille* in his hand. "Now then," he said, "'lend me your ears,' as the Turks say. This is an easy one:—

"When foreign nations leagued in fight
Our realm to overthrow;
Upon my first Britannia's might,
Subdued the haughty foe.

'In many a hall, where fashion reigns,
And *ennui* holds her power,
Attention oft my second gains,
To wile the tedious hour.

'My whole beheld a glorious fray,
That beat a hero down,
And won, on that eventful day,
Another's laurel-crown.'"

"I have it, I have it," cried Julia; "it is Waterloo."

"Quite right, fair lady. Now for a bit of the tender and sentimental:—

"Seated beneath the arching bough,
A fountain sparkling nigh,
With guardian Water-god below,
Sweet odours floating by,

‘Oft has my first, with blush and sighs,
 Been sever’d from the fair;
Who to her lover, the rich prize
 My *second* scarcely dare.

‘If whilst this blissful period flies
 Some spy should do my *whole*,
They’d wish the Water-god to rise,
 ‘And drown him in the bowl.’”

“It is what you do even now on my good temper and patience, John,” said his aunt, “by twisting up my netting silk into all sorts of knots, during your reading—*trespass*.”

“Aye, aye, aunt, you have ‘sat beneath the arching bough’ yourself not so many years since,” laughed John, “or you would not so quickly have found it out.”

“Go on, you saucy lad, with your reading,” said his uncle, from the backgammon table, “or I shall send one of my *men* at your head.”

“The next is in quite a different style; martial, yet melancholy; monitory and memorable:—

“‘When to the field the hero goes,
For conquest wild, for fame athirst,
Feeble wold fall his sabre’s blows,
If forged without my first.

‘Without my second if we see,
One who would strive our love to win,
Oh! may we all his presence flee,
For he is false within.

‘And when upon the scaffold died,
One who had sat upon a throne,
My whole stood faithful by his side
Undaunted, though alone!’”

A few guesses were of course made upon the name of our own unfortunate monarch, Charles I., but unsuccessfully, until Mrs. Maitland again relieved their

doubts, by saying, "Who has not read, and remembered, that memorable speech to the unfortunate Louis XVI., of 'Fils de Saint Louis, montez au ciel !' made by the Abbé *Edgeworth*!"

"Here is a French charade for *you, Julia*," said John, archly ; "you will be sure to guess it, for it is what all ladies are fond of :—

"‘Mon premier est un des éléments,
Mon second un mot souvent va,
Mon troisième, tu le reçois en naissance
Et mon tout est une liqueur très forte.’"

"Really, John, you are enough to make one need your *eau-de-vie*, to keep one from fainting under your impertinences," she replied.

"I will make *l'amende honorable* :—

"‘Mon premier est un métal précieux
Mon second (*ton image, qui*), habite les cieux
‘Et mon tout est un fruit délicieux.’”

"Your addition gives the key to it," she answered, with a smile. "When you want to puzzle any one, do not be so complimentary."

"Here is a French one for *you, Mary*," said he, "as you are such an admirer of 'la belle science'; tell us the reason for this strange reluctance on the part of your sable sisters."

"Pourquoi les négresses refusent elles d'apprendre la musique ?"

"Parcequ'on leur dit, qu'une blanche,* vaut deux noires,"* answered Mary, quickly.

"The next is one of my own," said John, "so be lenient :—

* A *blanche*, in music signifies *one minum*, and a *noire*, a *crotchet*.

“From Persia’s royal head remove
One letter—that’s my first;
From every spray, in every grove,
In spring my next will burst.

“When ‘Wakefield’s Vicar’ sent his son,
To sell his fav’rite nag,
He deem’d the spectacles he won,
My whole bore in his bag.

“But when the treach’rous fraud he found,
He burnt with rage and shame,
And felt a word of equal sound,
That is not *spelt* the same.”

“That is to say,” said John, when the party had given this up, “*his* was ‘a case of chagrin,’ instead of the *spectacles* each having a *shagreen* case.”

“What have you got there, John?” asked Julia, eagerly, as she tried to take possession of a sheet of paper covered with strange-looking figures.

“Patience, patience, my fair friend, you shall see it in good time, but guess these charades first, my stock is all but exhausted :—

“‘ My first is a small preposition,
My second is part of a wheel,
My whole, in a *belle* of condition,
To the purse makes a frequent appeal.’”

“‘Proof required,’ as they say in the schools,” said Cameron.

“And *she* shall walk in silk *attire*,” parodied John, in answer. “Now for my last to-night :—

“‘ My first is, when Irish, oftentimes relished,
My second in Cromwell we trace,
My whole is a House, whose last scion has perished,
And Victoria sits in their place.’”

“ King George ought to answer that,” said Jessie, laughing.

“ Well, then,” he replied, “ the first is the *Stew* my sister Julia has long been in to look at John’s hieroglyphical paper, and the second is the *art*, with which he has prevented her so doing.”

“ But which I now present to the fair lady, sincerely wishing her a good appetite and digestion,” said John, bowing.

The paper was covered with large and small octagonal devices, varied with circles and ovals, and having four small figures, shaped like bottles, placed at the corners. In each of these devices were written some words, and Julia discovered, upon a nearer inspection, that what had so greatly excited her surprise and curiosity, was neither more nor less than an *Enigmatical Dinner*, whose rather heterogeneous dishes spoke more for the liberality of the spirit which dictated the repast, than for the elegance of the taste which arranged them in the following “ admired disorder :”—

The sailor's delight.	Melancholy soup, changing a letter.	An Island in the Atlantic.
Rustic employment, and the reverse of youth.	Part of a shoe, fried.	Crooked Sarah, steward.
The sixteenth letter and every one.	Musical Instruments.	
The food of Israel.	A much esteemed Knight, roasted.	A sign in the zodiac.
A coloured measurement.	A province in France.	The soldier's habitation.
Running water.	The Grand Seignor's dominions in chains.	The first temptation.
One of Noah's Sons.	A thing of no consequence.	Advertisements.
Wine in a skin.	The ornamental part of the head roasted.	A sum of money.
Little Martha's.	An unruly member.	A silly bird & wild fruit.
A tailor's perquisite.	A field.	A high hill.
	A lean wife roasted.	A blockhead.
	Troublesome people.	Married folks.
	The roost of a bird broiled.	English earth apples.
The capital of Portugal.	Tranquillity soup, changing a letter.	Counterfeit agony.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FERNDALE SCHOOL.—THE PROCESSION.—HUNTING THE BELL.—MUFTI.—ARITHMETICAL PUZZLES.—THE BALLOON RESTORED.—ROSE DANCE.—THE BUMPER AT PARTING.

THE last bright gleams of the declining sun shone through the leafless branches of the stately old elms, when the lively strains of the Ferndale band were heard approaching the Grange ; and shortly afterwards the parties stationed at the windows of the oak parlour discerned the expected guests.

The procession which approached had a very pretty and peculiar effect. First walked a man supporting, with some difficulty, a royal standard, borrowed from “the Club” for the occasion ; next followed the “Ferndale brass band,” arrayed in their smart uniform, and making “the welkin ring” with their inspiring tones. After them came two of the senior boys, each carrying a large garland elevated on a long pole, and composed of ivy and the red-berried holly. Mr. Harrison and the venerable parish clerk were the next in order, after whom came the thirty school girls, two and two, headed by their neat and pretty young mistress, who bore a white staff bedecked with coloured streamers of ribbon. The union jack, borne aloft by a pair of stalwart arms, next caught the frosty air, and then the school-boys in orderly array, with Mr. Biddulph, and his ward of office, closed the line.

The clock in the old Tower struck four, as the procession drew up at the entrance to the Grange, and the nail-studded door being flung wide open,

the fine spacious hall became visible, nearly filled with the guests, children, and domestics of the venerable owner, who, advancing from the group, gave a kind and hearty welcome to the village throng. The “cellaret” was soon converted into an *extempore* “cloak (or rather *tippet*) room,” and the youthful guests seated on forms around temporary tables, which exhibited a profusion of plumcake, platefuls of bread and butter, and other tempting accompaniments to the sweet and excellent tea, which soon threw its “fragrant steam” over the well-spread board.

Julia, Mary, and George, were ably supported by their young guests in their duties as waiters upon the rustic company, and much amused at their feats in the consumption of the cakes and tea. But even the appetite of village-school children has a limit, and at length all were sufficiently satisfied to allow the tables to be cleared and removed.

A temporary absence into the housekeeper’s room gave the required space for this movement, and then began the entertainments, as set forth in George’s *programme*.

The *dais* had been duly raised, and prettily decorated with evergreens, holly-berries strung in chains, and festooned from one green garland to another, and interspersed with small paper banners and scrolls, bearing such appropriate mottoes as “Merit meets its reward.”—“Be merry and wise.”—“Work well, play well,” *et cetera*. Two large staples had been driven into the wall to support the expected flags, which hung in very graceful folds behind Mrs. Beaumont’s chair, who was seated in the centre of the platform with her *gentry* guests on either side, and the band was stationed at the other end of the large room, and some of the more noisy instruments dispensed with.

The junior Maitlands and their cousins again joined “King George” and his sisters in arranging a vocal group, and the village scholars, forming side choruses, commenced with the band accompaniment, John’s new adaptation to the favourite air of

Auld Lang Syne.

“ Who has not heard the wide-spread fame
Of Beaumont’s ancient line,
That earn’d a lov’d and honour’d name,
In days of Auld Lang Syne?
In arts, in arms, in peace, in war,
They ever foremost stood,
The Christian’s purse, the hero’s car,
Each aid their country’s good.

Chorus.

“ Then help to sing the wide-spread fame
Of Beaumont’s ancient line,
Who earn’d a lov’d and honour’d name,
In days of Auld Lang Syne.

“ And she, who long has fill’d their place,
And borne that honour’d name,
For gen’rous deeds, for kindly grace,
Our love and homage claim.
She aids the poor with heart and hand,
Coutent and toil to blend ;
Is lib’ral, courteous, pitying, bland,
To every rank a friend.

Chorus.

“ Then help to sing the wide-spread fame
Of Beaumont’s ancient line,
Our hostess well becomes the name,
Belov’d in ‘Auld Lang Syne.’ ”

The amiable old lady was much gratified by this unexpected tribute, and the chorus, which was given with right good will.

And now began a merry scene—two boys and two

girls were selected from the rest, and their eyes tightly bandaged. They were then led into the middle of the room, and the rest formed a circle round them at the extent of their joined hands. Into this circle one more was now admitted, no other than our friend John, who, after his fortnight's rest, and careful tending of his ankle, seemed to have regained all his wonted activity. His eyes were as active and untrammelled as his limbs, and in his right hand he carried a small silver bell; stationing himself close behind one of the blindfolded girls, he rung a sharp peal in her startled ear, and before she, or her companions could turn to the spot with outstretched arms, he had run to the other side of the circle and repeated his alarm, which again drew them towards the part he instantly quitted. The rapidity of John's movement, the cautious steps and sudden turns of the blinded searchers, the extraordinary manner in which he contrived to escape from their grasp, and the awkward astonishment exhibited in the wondering gestures of his pursuers, produced shouts of laughter from the circle round, to the majority of whom this game of "hunting the bell" was a complete novelty. John's faithless ankle at length gave him a most desperate twinge as he was turning sharp round (after darting under the arms of two of his male pursuers, who had joined hands), and the pause he was compelled to make, to recover from the pain, made him an easy prey to the bewildered children, who now had to guess the name of their prisoner.

Jane, anxious to prevent her brother from resuming his exertions at present, whispered the required information to one of the girls, who thereupon with great glee emancipated herself from her bondage, by proclaiming, in a loud voice, "It is Mr. Harper from London."

Mrs. Beaumont now insisted upon it, that John should not again take an active part in the amusement he had so successfully begun, and one of the boys who had been blindfolded, becoming the bell-ringer, Julia and Richard took the place of him and John's captor.

The less practised, and *heavier shod* rustic, could not compete in activity with his predecessor, but he contrived to keep the bell in pretty good play, and was at length captured by Julia, who, by dint of a sly push of her bandage, was able to identify him as "William Jones." One most amusing part of the game was exhibited when Julia thus became the "*belle*" of the circle, for being as light and active as John, she eluded all efforts to secure her, and in so doing the eagerly extended arms frequently embraced *one another*, and it was with the greatest difficulty tell-tale mirth could be repressed, whilst the muffled ones were feeling over the hands and faces of their supposed captive, until the *bandaged* forehead told of their fruitless toil.

"There's sympathy embodied," cried John, as he watched with much amusement a scene like the above.

"*Sympathy!* Mr. Harper; I do not comprehend you," said a middle-aged lady, wearing rather a *severe* looking head-dress; "explain, if you please."

"It is '*a fellow feeling*' for a *fellow creature*, ma'am," said John, demurely; and the laugh with which his answer was greeted, proved that the joke had *told*.

After some period of perseverance in this new game, "King George" referred to his *programme*, and thirteen chairs were ordered into the room, for the accessories to a game of "Mufti." Fourteen youthful guests being selected in *couples*, the band was desired to play, and, selecting a tune at once lively and martial,

the game began. Most people know that it consists in this—The chairs are placed close together, alternately back and front ; the players walk, or rather glide, round them, keeping tune to the music ; after three or four times pacing the dizzy round, the well-tutored band stopped suddenly, and each boy and girl dropped as soon as possible into the chair nearest them. As there was one less chair than persons to fill them, it followed, as a thing of course, that some one must remain unseated, and the excitement and amusement of the game, consists in the desire and efforts of each party to secure a chair. It was one of the boys who in this first struggle was unsuccessful ; and he having retired, another chair was removed, to continue the excitement. The leader of the band entered into the spirit of the scene, and after each sudden stop in the music, and consequent decrease in the candidates for *chairing*, he played more and more lively airs, and in quicker time, so that by the time the seven couples had been reduced to two, in the persons of Jessie and George, and only one chair remained for occupancy, their merry chase round and round the coveted seat was a perfect *whirl* of excitement. In another moment the tune ceased. Jessie sunk down in the chair with a laugh of delight, and George was left *minus* ; whilst acclamations and clapping of hands followed the young lady's triumph ! John then spoke to Mr. Biddulph, and as, in obedience to Mrs. Beaumont's wishes, the boys had come provided with their slates and pencils, they were now drawn from their receptacle amongst the caps and bonnets, and slung in the true school fashion round their neck ; they then stood in front of the platform, and Mrs. Graham, by her mother's request, put some Arithmetical puzzles before them, as a relief to the more active sports.

Mrs. Graham's first query was the following : "What is the least number that can be divided by each of the nine digits, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, without leaving a remainder ?"

Away went the busy pencils to work, and in less time than could possibly have been expected, three boys out of the selected twelve held forth their slates for inspection ; and Mr. Maitland, who had the solution to the several riddles committed to his care, pronounced that the figures "2520," thereon placed, gave the correct answer.

Mrs. Beaumont then called the successful respondents nearer to her, and gave them each a small book, as a prize for their quickness.

Mrs. Graham proceeded in her puzzling questions :— "How long a time would it take to count a million of sovereigns, supposing a man could count sixty in a minute, and worked ten hours a day ?"

Several of the youthful gentry hazarded a guess, varying from two days to fourteen ; but the schoolboys went systematically to work with their slates and pencils, and in a short time several of the former were again presented to Mr. Maitland, with the correct solution of, 27 days, 7 hours, 46 minutes, 40 seconds.

"Well, they do you vast credit, Mr. Biddulph," said John, admiringly. "I know *we* could not have come that so quickly at R—— school !"

"It is *practice* makes perfect, sir," returned Mr. Biddulph, making an unintentional pun.

Prizes were again awarded to the clever lads, and another puzzle proposed :—

"A hundred hurdles may be so placed as to enclose two hundred sheep. How many will it require to hold four hundred sheep ?"

Julia here observed a little girl whispering earnestly

to Miss Capper, who smiled and nodded in return, and upon inquiry, found that Eliza Green "thought *she* could answer *that*."

The child was therefore brought forward, and dropping a curtsey to Mrs. Beaumont, said: "If you please, ma'am, I should put forty-nine hurdles at each side, and one at each end, to hold the two hundred sheep; and then I should only want *two* more hurdles, one at the top, and one at the bottom, to make it *twice as wide*, and then it would hold *twice as many*."

Eliza Green felt amply rewarded for her ingenuity by the present of a pretty and entertaining little book.

"How many different hands can be held at the game of Whist?" continued Mrs. Graham.

Mr. Biddulph explained to his boys of how many cards a pack consisted, and that thirteen constituted a hand; and then, after a longer calculation than heretofore, the head boy of the school, James Thompson, gave the enormous product of, 63,501,055,960, which Mr. Maitland said, "according to his *paper*, was correct, and he was sure he could not gainsay it."

James Thompson was accordingly presented with a very nice book, and Mrs. Beaumont then said, "You must now have some more play, or you will think yourselves still at school."

They then formed a ring again, and Susan introduced the graceful and pretty dance of "the Rose" to the notice of the well pleased children, who were all delighted when their own turn came to exhibit the preference and innocent flirting this dance permits to the holder of the "flower." When they had rested awhile, after this exercise, John called his choristers together again, and they sung the following animating

parody, or imitation of “Here’s a health to all good lasses.”

“Raise your voices, lads and lasses,
Come, arrange yourselves in classes,
Not for learning, but for play.
Here we take our fill of pleasure,
Without checking, without measure,
For ‘tis New Year’s holiday.
Some are dancing,
Cromets blowing;
Bright eyes glancing,
Cheeks are glowing.
We are merry lads and lasses,
We’ll divide ourselves in classes,
Not for learning, but for play.”

The door now opened, and Joseph and Ivān bore in the renovated balloon, which was regarded by the school-children with great astonishment. Willing hands were speedily found to hold it in an upright position, until a ladder could be procured to rest against the large beams of the ancient ceiling, into one of which a hook had been already fixed to hold “the swinging treasury,” which was speedily hoisted to its destination. In obedience to John’s advice, two “classes,” or companies, were now formed to attack this “Castle of comfits,” from which one of each side were selected for the purpose of beginning the onset, and a merry scene immediately ensued. The blinded champions quite as frequently clashed their sticks together, as aimed a successful blow at the balloon, and even now and then received a smart rap on their own shoulders, which had been intended for a very different purpose.

Still *some* blows told, and the showers of nuts and comfits were eagerly appropriated by the surrounding

children. The duration of each attack was to be regulated by the music of the band, who had inspired the pair by playing a martial air, and upon this stopping, the first two ceased their attacks, removed their bandages, and were succeeded by another couple of aspirants. When the once gay balloon was nearly denuded of its outward covering, and the inner compartments laid bare like the interior of a beehive, George cried, "Halt!" and the exciting exercise was discontinued. The children were then *marched* in order, to the housekeeper's room, with the band at their head, to give the opportunity of arranging and spreading the supper tables, and numerous and willing hands soon accomplishing this alteration, the juvenile guests speedily re-entered the room in orderly array, to the appropriate air, of "The roast beef of old England."

After Mr. Harrison had said grace, the guests all did justice to the feast. Mrs. Beaumont, her daughter, and all their party, were seated at the tables amongst the children, and by their kind attention and affability, made them each as happy as possible. Home-made wines were distributed along the tables, from which they were moderately helped, and it were difficult to conceive a happier scene.

At the conclusion of the feast, Mr. Harrison rose, and said, "My dear friends and children, *one* health must be drunk before we separate. After such bountiful favours as have been heaped upon us all this evening, we should be very ungrateful, did we not all most heartily join in wishing "health and happiness to our dear, kind friend and benefactress—Mrs. Beaumont!"

Ere even a shout of joyful acquiescence could respond to this appeal, John was mounted, glass in hand, upon the form, where he had been seated, and one

wave of his hand gave the signal to the musicians for their accompaniment to his extemporaneous song of,

“A bumper of gooseberry, fill, fill for me,
‘Tis as good as your foreign champagne,
Take ginger or currant, a bumper ‘t must be,
If we ne’er drink a bumper again ;
Now, now, when our hostess wins love from each class,
With gratitude let us address her.
Upstanding, uncover’d, round, round, let it pass,
Here’s the health of our friend—God bless her.
Hurra ! hurra ! God bless her.”

Hearty and unanimous was the cheering with which this appropriate burst of feeling was chorused, the children’s voices in *alto* being predominant. When the acclamations had subsided, “King George” rose and said, “My grandmother begs me to thank you all for your good wishes, and should she be spared another year, will be very happy for you to have the same opportunity of repeating them.” This speech obtained a repetition of joyful shouts, and then Mr. Harrison gave the signal for the national Anthem, after the singing of which the guests departed, most thoroughly delighted with their evening’s entertainment, which furnished them with discourse on their moonlight walk homewards.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE VISIT PROLONGED.—THE SCHOOLMASTER'S REQUEST.—PUZZLES FOR THE PERSEVERING.—INVESTIGATION.—THE YOUNG AUTHORS.—TERSEY.—FOREIGN RIDDLES.

AT breakfast the next day George introduced a request for a prolonged stay from his friends, and after some little demur from Mr. and Mrs. Maitland, it was agreed to upon certain conditions. *They* were to drive home as soon as the meal was finished, to see the younger children, and make arrangements for remaining until the following Monday, when the three junior Grahams were to accompany their friends home, and stay until the whole party dispersed, upon John and his sisters returning to London, and Mr. and Mrs. Maitland proceeding to pay a long promised visit to his brother in Berkshire.

“Here comes Biddulph, I see ; what news does he bring, I wonder ?” exclaimed Mrs. Beaumont.

Upon the schoolmaster being introduced, he first repeated his thanks for the delightful entertainment of the previous evening, and then said, “The arithmetical puzzles kindly put before my boys last night, madam, were talked over with much pleasure amongst the seniors, and James Thompson, who won the prize for solving the difficult one about the changes in a pack of cards, having observed that the paper held by Mr. Maitland contained several more, made it his particular request to me this morning, that I would endeavour to procure them for himself and his schoolfellows, to work at in their play hours.”

Mrs. Graham was the owner of the wished-for document, which she immediately took from her writing case, and was about to give it to the schoolmaster, when George said, "Oh ! mamma, let us just read what these wise lads of Ferndale are going to exercise their brains upon," and taking the paper from his mother's hand, he read as follows :—

"The eldest of four sisters having seventy eggs to dispose of, the next fifty, the third thirty, and the youngest ten, agreed to sell them at the same rate. By this arrangement they each brought home the same sum of money. How was this done ?"

"I know that answer," said Mr. Biddulph ; "they must have sold their eggs at seven for a penny, and three-pence each for all beyond that proportion, by which means they wöuld bring home ten-pence a-piece. My boys do not know it ; so it will be a good puzzle."

"Place the nine digits in two different lines," continued George, "so that in one case the sum may be seventeen, and in the other thirty-one."

"That sounds easy," said Richard, "although I do not know how to do it."

"This seems a poser," cried George. "Just listen. What would be the length of a golden causeway, ten sovereigns in breadth, and laid as closely as possible, if eight hundred millions of sovereigns (the amount of the national debt) were employed, and each sovereign measured seven-eighths of an inch in diameter ?"

"Whew !" whistled John, in astonishment. "I would not try to find that out, to obtain the sovereigns necessary to form the 'golden road to learning' here indicated."

"This last seems comparatively easy," concluded George. "Place four nines, so that their sum will be one hundred," and he folded the paper, and gave to

the worthy schoolmaster, who thereupon took a respectful leave, and departed.

"Now, my dear madam," said Mr. Maitland, in the evening, addressing Mrs. Beaumont, "you must give me my revenge at backgammon for a little while, and then we can vary your amusements."

"What are you thinking of so intently, mamma?" cried Jessie, laughing, as she watched her mother's fixed gaze at the fire, whilst her netting lay idly in her lap.

Mrs. Maitland roused herself with a smile, and replied, "Guess the *subject* of my thoughts, my dear, and it will fulfil the very purpose for which I was so much absorbed."

"You are talking riddles, dear mamma," returned Jessie, "were *they* the subject of your thoughts?"

"No," she answered. "Guess again."

"Were they animal or mineral, aunt?" asked John, jocosely.

"I was endeavouring to arrange a new game for you," she replied, "a sort of adaptation of the old one of 'what is my thought like,' and your expression, John, came most *apropos*, as it was one of the very forms in which I meant to tell you the questions must be asked, to arrive at the desired solution of my new game of 'Investigation.' I have never yet seen it played, but I think it will exercise your ingenuity and talents, and be a little variety to those which require pencil and paper. I shall think of an object, and you, by dint of ingeniously framed questions, must divine that object in *twenty* guesses, or own yourselves defeated, and then the penalty of such defeat I leave it to you to decide upon."

"In what form must we put the questions?" asked George.

"Indirectly, but pithily," answered Mrs. Maitland. "For instance, ask if it be *tangible*? An affirmative does away with all idea that the thing thought of is a merely *mental* subject. A negative to the question, is it compound? in the same way greatly simplifies its nature, and so on; but you will best understand it by playing it. So now guess what is the subject of my thought."

A little hesitation took place as to the precedence of querists, and then they proceeded as follows:—

Mrs. Graham. "Is it tangible?"

Mrs. Maitland. "Yes."

Susan. "Is it compound?"

Mrs. M. "Yes. Stop. I must tell you that it will be part of the rules, that the answers must always be *monosyllables*, or at any rate in one *word*. Now proceed."

George. "Is it animal and mineral?"

Mrs. M. "Yes."

Jessie. "Is it vegetable also?"

Mrs. M. "Yes."

Mary. "Is it soft or hard?"

Mrs. M. "Both."

Jane. "Is it stationary?"

Mrs. M. "Sometimes."

Richard. "Has it a head?"

Mrs. M. "No."

Julia. "Has it arms?"

Mrs. M. "Yes."

Agnes. "Has it legs too?"

Mrs. M. "No."

Miss Chapman. "Is it vocal?"

Mrs. M. "No."

Cameron. "Has it the power of motion?"

Mrs. M. "No."

Tom. "Why, mamma, you said that it was only stationary *sometimes*, so it must be capable of moving."

Mrs. M. "That does not follow ; it certainly is not always stationary, and yet it has not the power of moving."

Tom. "Oh ! then can it be *moved*?"

Mrs. M. "Yes."

John. "What colour is it ?"

Mrs. M. "I hardly know whether that question is quite fairly put, but I answer, *various*."

The querists here consulted together, Mrs. Graham "summing up the evidence." She then asked, "How many guesses may we make before owning ourselves defeated ?"

"I think we had better limit ourselves to the customary number of three," replied Mrs. Maitland.

"Is it an easy chair ?" enquired Susan.

"No," replied her aunt, "that *has* legs as well as arms, which is one reason against it."

"One of the banners in the hall ?" suggested John, "that has silk for the animal compound, gold for the mineral, and a wooden pole for the vegetable, and has the *arms* upon it."

"No, John, *I* do not condescend to puns," returned his aunt, smiling.

"We did not take our allowed number of questions in the first instance," said Mary. "May I now ask whether it be foreign or domestic ?

Mrs. Maitland smiled very archly as she replied, rather emphatically, "*Both*."

"Then, dear madam," returned Mary, "I think it is grandmamma's *sledge*."

"You are quite right, my dear," she replied ; "and I think, if you will reconsider your questions and my

answers, you will find the description tallies very well with my thoughts."

"This first round of your new game has been tolerably successful, I think," observed Mrs. Graham ; "and there must of course be a great variety of subjects for *thought* in it. The only part which I imagine would make it rather wearisome for a continuance, is the monotony which seems likely to arise in the questions."

"I fancy they might be sufficiently varied to prevent that," returned Mrs. Maitland ; "it would not do to make this the sole amusement of an evening, nor to persevere in it too long ; but still I think it will exercise both thought and ingenuity as a variety."

"Let us try another round," said John.

Mr. Maitland and Mrs. Beaumont here joined the circle, and requested to know the subject of their discourse, and when informed, Mrs. Graham proposed that one of the new comers should give them a subject to guess at, as likely to possess novelty. Her mother preferred being a listener, so Mr. Maitland in a short time professed himself "willing to hear and answer any questions they might think fit to address to him."

"Can I use it ?" began his wife.

Mr. M. "Yes."

Jane. "Is it compound ? as that seems to be a usual question."

Mr. M. "No."

Julia. "Is it animal, mineral, or vegetable ?"

Mr. M. "Neither."

John. "Oh ! ho ! then it is an ideality. Can I measure it ?"

Mr. M. "Yes."

John looked very significant as he said to his fellow-questioners, "I thought so. I believe it is '*time*,'" and was surprised to meet a denial of its accuracy.

"Go on," said Mr. Maitland, "that was a good guess for the present answers, but perhaps future ones will show its fallacy."

Jessie. "I am half afraid to ask, is it visible?"

Mr. M. "Yes."

George. "In the same way, I do not know whether to inquire, is it tangible?"

Mr. M. "Yes."

Mary. "Could we do without it?"

Mr. M. "No."

Mrs. Graham. "Is it opaque or clear?"

Mr. M. "Clear."

Richard. "Does it ever form a barrier."

Mr. M. "Yes."

Jane. "Does it sometimes disdain one?"

Mr. M. "Sometimes."

Susan. "We are getting on the right scent, I think. Does it offer an abode to many living creatures?"

Mr. M. "Yes."

Agnes. "Now, mamma, you sum up *this* evidence, and let us debate upon it before we go any further, Jessie thinks we have guessed it."

Upon recapitulating the questions and answers, Mrs. Maitland agreed with the others, and proclaimed to her husband that they thought his word was "Water," which he acknowledged to be true.

"You pressed me very hard," he said; "I had intended the subject of my thoughts to have been "*thought*" itself; but to disappoint John's idea of an *ideality*, I changed it to one of the elements."

"You were very quick and clever to do so, papa," said Richard. "But a few evenings ago you promised us an idea for a variety in our '*pencil* sketches;' will you tell us now?"

"You are again too late, my boy," returned his

father ; “John has just reminded us that *time* can be *measured*, and upon referring to my *pocket-rule*, in the shape of a watch, I find it is getting towards Mrs. Beaumont’s retiring hour.”

“Oblige us then to-morrow evening, my dear sir,” said that lady, “when we will not spend so much time at the backgammon board.”

“I do not *promise*,” answered he, “it depends upon letters in the morning.”

The driving sleet and snow which obscured the outdoor prospect the next morning, rendered the comforts within still more enjoyable ; and Mrs. Maitland regretted extremely that the arrival of the anticipated letters obliged her husband to brave the inclement weather, and proceed in his magisterial capacity, to the neighbouring town of N——, promising, however, to rejoin the party again on the Thursday morning, if not before.

As his wife and children, with the Grahams, stood around him in the hall, to bid him good bye, Jessie exclaimed, “What, papa, are you going to wear that shabby old cap again ! really, I must work you a new one, for I am quite ashamed of that.”

“Never be ashamed of old friends, my child,” replied her father. “I shall be very happy to receive a specimen of your handywork, but this old cap has been my companion in too many pleasing scenes, to be lightly thrown aside. By-the-by,” he continued, addressing the whole group, “there’s an idea for you. You will want something to amuse yourselves with this morning, as you can neither walk, nor go ‘over the hills, and far away’ in George’s tiny sledge ; so sit down, two or three of you, and write ‘the Adventures of a Travelling Cap,’ or any other subject you think may have passed through a variety of places and

scenes, and save them for my perusal ; but here is the gig, so good bye."

"I think there are one or two articles of dress or furniture, that could tell as good a tale of 'sayings and doings,' as ever have been yet chronicled, either as 'the history of a feather,' or 'the adventures of a shilling,'" said John, as they returned to the sitting-room.

"But *our* compilations must not be quite so voluminous as those are," remarked George, laughing, "or we shall not have finished them by the time Mr. Maitland returns."

"No, certainly not," replied John, "those were histories, our must be *historiettes* ; and now let us beat up for recruits to this honourable Society of Scribblers."

Upon informing the rest of the party of their wishes, to their great vexation they were met by a refusal from one and all. "We are not capable of it." "You will do it much better than we shall," were some of the excuses.

"We will not entirely disappoint Mr. Maitland," said Mrs. Graham, "so I will write the names on a slip of paper, and draw three out, and whether clever or stupid, seniors or juniors, the bearers of those names must be the authors."

This being agreed to, the lottery took place, and to the amusement of their companions and their own chagrin, Mary and Agnes were associated with John as the writers of the proposed histories.

"Look, Jessie," exclaimed Julia from the bay-window, "here comes our new piano, upon one of the railway waggons."

"Oh ! come away, Mary, come Agnes," cried John, let us go into the quiet library, and shut ourselves up

to the pleasures or labours of composition. Here there will be so much noise and confusion, directly."

"Do give me an idea, cousin John," said Agnes, as they proceeded along the passage; "what shall I write about?"

"Have you no old carpet bag, or box, in your possession," he replied, "that has seen service in the family?"

"Ah! I think I know what will do now," she returned, in a cheerful voice, "if Mary does not think of the same."

"I intend to make Miss Chapman's old watch the subject of my adventures," answered Mary, "as the appearance of it is sufficiently ancient to warrant the supposition that it must have been in scenes of by-gone years."

"Come, let us sit comfortably round this library table," said John, arranging some chairs as he spoke, "here are two inkstands, and lots of pens."

The business of composition proceeded very pleasantly, and the task of each was completed before the dinner-hour arrived.

Upon rejoining the rest of the party, they found that the new piano had been successfully unpacked, and arranged in a recess in the small drawing-room, and the tone having already been tested and approved by each of the girls in turn, it was resolved to give a further proof of its powers in the evening.

When the dinner was over, as the weather presented so few inducements to go out in it, Julia proposed that they should proceed to the old hall, and amuse themselves for an hour or two with a game at "les Graces," and upon adjourning thither, James Cameron inquired whether they also knew the game commonly called "Tersey."

On receiving a reply in the negative, and finding that this large room gave space to play it in, he instructed them in the preliminary arrangements, by placing them in couples, one person close in front of the other, thus forming a large double circle, as it might be called, with a space between each pair. Two others were left unplaced, one of whom then commenced the game, by running after, and endeavouring to catch the other, whose endeavour it was to place him or herself *before* one of the couples, thus forming one line of *three*, the last of whom now became "*il terzo*" (the *third*, from which word the game is derived), must instantly start off, and be pursued by the "odd" one; as soon as this "odd" player has touched or caught the other, he or she must get possession of a place in *front* of another couple, whose *third* line then starts off, again to be pursued by the last caught person, with the same efforts, and similar results. This game gives occasion for constant exercise and activity, as the runners are continually changing, and in the present instance, the youth and agility of the parties rendered it most exciting and amusing.

They were at length fairly exhausted, and obliged to pause.

"Well, Cameron," said John, panting from exertion, "you have found out something to keep the blood from stagnating in our veins."

"It is capital exercise, and good fun," returned Cameron, "especially on the grass, because then if one chances to have a fall, no great damage can be done. About eight or ten couples, and a good field, or lawn, to form a large circle on, and I know few games more exciting, in which *both* sexes can join."

"Thank you, Mr. Cameron, for your anglicized version of '*il terzo*,'" said Miss Chapman, "which I

hope we shall have an opportunity of trying in the park sometime in the approaching spring."

They then returned to the senior ladies, and after tea, Jane and Susan, at the particular request of their friends, opened the new instrument, and gave ample proof of its excellence, and their own capabilities.

During an interval in the music, Miss Chapman, addressing John, said, "Mary told me the other evening that my stock of French, and other foreign riddles, had been much wished for, I have now brought down the book into which they are copied, if you would like to look them over."

John received the little volume with polite acknowledgments, and bespeaking attention, read the following French charade :—

"Sans mon chef, je suis un oiseau de passage, rendez-moi mon chef, et je ne vaux rien après dîner."

"Ah ! maintenant, je le comprends," he added, after a few minute's pause, "la première est une *outarde* et avec son chef, elle deviendra la *moutarde*."

"En voilà une autre," he continued, "devinez la." "Avec mon chef, je ne crains pas les dangers ; mais si sans pitié, vous me coupez la tête, je me trouve dans un potager."

"That sounds queer," said Richard ; "we should go in a body, I think, and consult Mrs. Markham what she orders as the components of a stew."

"Onions, carrots," mused Julia, "neither of those, as French words, will give any light on the subject."

"I have it," cried Richard, "it is 'un *brave*, et une *rave'."*

"Ecoutez donc, demoiselles," resumed the reader, "la prochaine est extrêmement poétique dans son genre, on l'a fait pour les dames je crois."

“Je brûle d’ardeur extreme, même en versant des larmes,
 Si je les ai versées c’est pour porter vos armes ;
 Je parcours tout l’univers
 En protégeant vos mystères !”

“Good !” said George, but I know that one, it is
cire à cacherer.”

“Now I come to one in *la bella lingua*,” said John :

“Toglimi il capo, e quel che ha vita e estinto,
 Toglimi un altro membro, e il tempo segno ;
 Siegni a toglimi ancor, e avrai dipinto,
 Chi frà i mortali stimasi il più degno
 Colla testa e coi pudi indico i lochi
 Ove ardevano un dì i sacri fochi ;
 E finalmente genera il mio tutto,
 Or gioja, or pace, or guerra e lutto.”

“That is a very pretty one,” said Mrs. Graham.
 “It was told us by La Marchesa della Pompeii,
 whom we met at Baden Baden.”

“Tell it to us, dear madam,” said Jessie, “I know
 very little of Italian.”

“Perhaps you would then understand it better,” said
 Mrs. Graham, “if I wrote the translation in English
 first, and showed you how it applies in the original.
 The translation is literally this :—

‘Take away my head, and that which has life is dead.
 Take away another member, and I denote time.
 Go on to subtract again from me, and you will depict,
 He who esteems himself the highest among mortals.
 With my head, and feet, I indicate the spots
 Where once burnt the sacred fires,
 Finally, my whole gives rise to
 Joy, and peace, or war, and grief !’”

When Jessie had perused this, Mrs. Graham pro-
 ceeded, “The word is the Italian ‘*amore*,’ the Eng-
 lish ‘*love*;’ and now, if you read it again, you will
 see the different significations.”

"Thank you," said Jessie, "I quite comprehend it now, with your kind elucidation."

"Have you any foreign riddles in that book?" asked Susan of her brother.

"Here is one written in German, which I cannot read," replied John, "but Miss Chapman has kindly appended an English translation, which I will give you; it seems pretty:—

'Over the bosom of the deep blue wave,
Without a bridge, a vessel, mast, or sail,
Gracefully I bear thy weight, but crave
Thy own assistance, that I may not fail.
For not for postures of repose, or rest,
Nor yet for sitting, is my vessel plann'd;
Thou must glide swiftly o'er the river's breast,
Beware thy head—advance—nor idly stand!'"

"I do not know what it is," said Jane, "and yet it sounds rather easy."

"It is very much better in the original," said Miss Chapman, "but it is difficult to write an enigma which will answer for more than one language."

"I have been reading it over again to myself," said John, "and assisted by certain rather unpleasant recollections of *Burton lake*, fancy this curiously formed vessel must be intended for a '*pair of skates*.'"

"You are right in your conjecture," replied Miss Chapman, "although in German the solution stands in the *singular* number as '*a skate*.'"

"Come, aunt Maitland," continued John, "you are a good geographer, as well as many other clever things, tell us where this country is situated, described so enigmatically—

'Mes mers n' eut jamais d'eau
Mes champs sont infertiles,

Je n'ai point de maisons,
Mais j'ai des grandes villes.
Je reduis en un point,
Mille objets divers ;
Je ne suis presque rien,
Et je suis l'univers."

"Vraiment c'est une énigme plus difficile, que toutes les autres," said his aunt, smiling, "je ne puis pas la deviner."

"Let me help you out of the difficulty," said a familiar voice behind her chair. "The solution to John's charade is, I think, *mappemonde*."

Mrs. Maitland turned round with a joyful exclamation of surprise, and joined the rest of the party in a hearty greeting at her husband's unexpected return.

CHAPTER XIV.

HISTORIETTES.—ADVENTURES OF A PORTMANTEAU.—HISTORY OF A WATCH.—NOTE BOOK OF A BENEDICT.—SUGGESTIONS FOR A NEW GAME.

"Did any of you take advantage of my hint about 'Adventures,'" inquired Mr. Maitland, after breakfast, "and commence authors in a small way, during my absence?"

"Oh! yes, papa," answered Jessie, "your daughter Agnes is about to figure in that character, in company with Mary Graham and cousin John."

"Agnes!" said her father, in a tone of surprise, "I had no idea that she was ever troubled with

'*cacoethes scribendi.*' I shall be quite curious to read the results of her efforts."

"Suppose we have the MSS. read aloud this morning," said Mrs. Beaumont; "there is nothing very tempting in the weather to induce outdoor occupations. Will you kindly undertake the office of reader, Mr. Maitland?"

"I will do my best to give effect to these *debutantes* in 'light literature,'" he replied, "and shall begin with Agnes's first attempt, entitled—

'ADVENTURES OF A PORTMANTEAU.'

"'I AM not conceited, but still I should like to give some account of my life, and a few adventures which have befallen me. I took a long time to be made, being very large and complete. I was covered with the best Russian leather, and had also rows of bright brass nails on my lid and sides; indeed, I was a great beauty, and felt sure of meeting with a purchaser.'

"'I was soon sent to London, along with a great many others, and we were deposited in a shop in Regent-street, and had not been there more than two days, when a lady entered with her son, and asked for some good portmanteaus. My master immediately pulled me out, rightly considering me one of the best of his stock, and the lady, after inquiring very minutely into my capabilities, bought me, and I was carried to her house, where the business of packing was going on, for my young master was going to leave town the following day to go to school.'

"'He was not much delighted at the thought of going there, but his mother, Mrs. Featherstone Haugh, tried to comfort him by filling my upper compartment with all sorts of good things, bulls-eyes, plum-cakes, and tarts. At last we set off, and after rather a

pleasant journey on the roof of a coach, arrived at the school late in the evening. Little or nothing occurred during my stay here ; and I should have been very dull, passing my days in the school dormitory, had it not been for occasional nocturnal visits from my young master, who, whenever he received a sound thrashing from Mr. Birch, which he richly deserved, consoled himself by eating my contents, and I often heard him muttering between his teeth that he should pass a miserable life without me.

“ ‘ At length the time arrived for us to return home for the holidays, and I was very glad to be pulled from under the bed, and once more to breathe the fresh air.

“ ‘ I thought I should have had a pleasant time during my master’s holidays, but it was not so, I again occupied the old garret, and for some years saw no variety but the periodical journeys to and from the school, which became quite monotonous. I often thought I should like to change my situation, but had no idea my wishes were soon about to be realized.

“ ‘ My master was now of a proper age to go to college, and I was not deemed smart enough to accompany him ; and Mrs. Featherstone Haugh being very economical (perhaps too much so for her station in life), determined to make a good penny of me, by selling me to any old Jew she might meet with.

“ ‘ I thought this was but an ill return for long and faithful service, where the flower of my youth and beauty had faded into comparative old age ; but such ingratitude took away all regretful feelings at the idea of leaving the house, when I was carried off by a kind looking old man to a shabby little shop, in a narrow, dirty lane. At the end of two days the old man succeeded, by dint of washing, scrubbing, and varnishing, in restoring me to a portion of my former beauty, and

soon after I was thus touched up, I was purchased by a young gentleman of the name of Oliver Brown, who was going abroad. With him I resided many years, travelling about from place to place, during which time my bones were terribly shaken, and at one time I was quite *unhinged*.

“ ‘I began to wish for rest and quietness, and was, soon after our return to England, able to effect this object ; for my master, in consideration of my services, granted me the use of an upper room in his house, and made me the keeper of some old papers, in which quiet retirement I am at present living, my only companions the gnats and spiders, and my only occupation musing on the past events of my long and busy life.’ ”

“ Bravo ! my little girl,” cried Mr. Maitland, as he concluded Agnes’s performance. “ I think your first attempt is quite a credit to a young lady of only thirteen years of age.”

The rest of the party having praised this *first* paper, requested Mr. Maitland to proceed.

“ Well, then,” he said, “ as I know that John, as a gallant young man, will wish to give ‘place aux dames,’ I shall proceed with Mary’s contribution ; who thus narrates—

‘ THE HISTORY OF A WATCH.’

“ ‘ My neighbour, the French clock in the drawing-room, having requested me to recount my history, I lose no time in commencing, though it will certainly not be so *striking* as his own. The different pieces of mechanism that compose me, were first put together in the year 1760, though they might have been fabricated a long time previously, but of course that I do not pretend to know, as I only undertake to recount my adventures from the time when I first began

to go, which is more than any of the race of man can do.

“ ‘ I am, as you will see from what I have just said, now ninety years old, but I do not (though a little the worse for wear) look so battered as an old gentleman of that age, although my face, which was very handsome, is, to be sure, a little marked by time.

“ ‘ I was fashioned, both externally and internally, with the greatest care, so much so, that I almost fancied I was intended for royalty itself ; but my master sought not to gratify pride, nor to gain money ; affection alone influenced him in his extreme anxiety to make me perfect, as a present for his young wife. It was the fashion then for watches to have two coats, and I was not inferior to my contemporaries in that respect. I had a green one, edged with gold, to wear in common, and a very rich gold one for best.

“ ‘ Thus equipped, I was presented to the lady, who did not (like the modern dames) scorn to wear me on account of my bulk. I was always corpulent, but that was deemed no defect in those days.

“ ‘ My master’s name was Milles, an alderman of the city of London, and one of the worshipful company of clockmakers. The first occasion on which his lady introduced me into company was at the Guild hall feast, on Lord Mayor’s day, when, for a wonder, she was ready to step into the coach directly the worthy alderman summoned her ; for this she had to thank *me*, and I have my suspicions that I was given to her, in a great measure, to coax her into punctuality. I was attached by a handsome chain to her neck, and had a servant, named *key*, to wait upon my movements, stir me up when I went too slow, and check me if I went too fast.

“ ‘ At this distance of time I cannot recall the magni-

fidence and abundance of the civic feast, nor any circumstance that passed. I only know my mistress stayed till she was fatigued, when she looked at me, and I gave her a hint to depart.

“‘ London was very gay at that time, it being just after the accession of George III. ; I was therefore present at many city festivities, which I will pass over, as well as the rest of my existence with the alderman’s wife, who died young, and I became the property of her daughter. This lady was married when very young to a Mr. Ball Jenkins, a merchant of London, very rich at the time of his marriage, but of so speculative a disposition, that in a few years he became a bankrupt, and his wife was obliged to give up her jewels—myself amongst them. I was purchased by a Jew, who conveyed me in the course of his dealings to one of his brethren in Portugal, with great encomiums upon my excellence and good *works*. As regards *looks*, when my best dress was on, I was as fresh as ever ; and as the Jew took good care not to tell my age, I was looked upon as quite juvenile, and was bought by the king’s jeweller, and afterwards by the king himself, who took a fancy to me for my steadiness and accuracy. The only fault that was found with me, was that when I first went over, I kept, from habit, London time ; I have since found it not at all unusual for what is considered right in one place, to be looked upon as quite wrong in another. In 1807, the French army, commanded by Junot, penetrated into Portugal, and the royal family fled from Lisbon to their South American possessions. I was left behind in the flight, and was disposed of to a jeweller by some page about the court from whom I was soon again purchased by a servant about to leave the family of Mr. Beckford, the wealthy Englishman.

“ ‘ My new owner brought me back to England, and disposed of me to great advantage, to an elderly lady residing at Camberwell. On her death, two years afterwards, I became the property of her daughter, who was a great invalid, and went into the country for change of air, taking me with her. She was an excellent woman, and I have frequently been a witness to the friendly admonitions and instructions she gave to two little girls, the daughters of the friend with whom she lived. To the elder of these girls I was consigned soon after, on my poor mistress’s death, upon her mother’s promise that I should never be parted with. I was by her immediately put into a dark drawer, and have no idea how long a period elapsed (as I could *keep no time* in my imprisonment), but upon my owner leaving school I was again given into her care, with injunctions to be careful of me, and think upon my late mistress.

“ ‘ I cannot say that my young lady ever ill-used me, but she frequently neglected to give me the necessary attendance of a servant, and I was more frequently under a physician’s hands than formerly. Geneva watches had become the mode, and my mistress was frequently urged to change me away for one of those, but she always replied, ‘ my mother promised in my name that I never would.’ I have sometimes wondered whether she remembered *other* things promised in her name as well. This has been when I have heard little girls repeating their catechism, for I now adorn a governess’s room, and I hear there is some chance of my revisiting Portugal. I care very little about it, though I think a warm climate suits me better than a cold one, as I am apt to grow torpid in the latter, and my circulation becomes sluggish. Perhaps you will say that this is the effect of old age ; but no, my hands are as

busy as ever, night and day, and I think I attract more attention now than I did thirty years ago ; youth and beauty extort admiration, and old age respect and veneration, while neither are accorded to the transition state.

“ ‘ But, bless me, Pendule, did you say that it was twelve o’clock ? it is time for me to *wind up*. I never heeded how time was passing. Good night.’ ”

“ You have managed to keep the interest up extremely well, my dear Mary,” said her grandmamma, “ and I for one, thank you for the amusement your little *historiette* has afforded me.”

“ I had made it rather longer, grandmamma,” she answered, “ but I thought you would all be tired of it, and so I burnt the rest.”

“ You have nicely ‘ taken the shine ’ out of me,” said John. “ I shall be quite ashamed to have my production read aloud, after your clever composition ; but hark ! there is positively the clock striking one ; we shall have the dressing bell ringing in ten minutes.”

“ Yes,” said Mrs. Maitland, “ we are like Mary’s *watch*, quite unaware how time steals away. I think, John, it will be better to defer reading your story until after dinner.” This being agreed to, the party separated to their rooms, and were soon reassembled round Mrs. Beaumont’s hospitable board.

Before the winter’s light had quite withdrawn, the social group again drew round the fire, and, in accordance with their request, Mr. Maitland then read them,

“ AN EXTRACT FROM THE NOTE BOOK OF A BENEDICT.”

“ I walked the other day up to Hampstead, to see my friend Miles Meredith, and not finding him at home, sat down to await his momentarily expected re-

turn, both hot and tired, after my dusty walk. A bachelor's room, when *tidied up*, presents but few things to amuse the eye. The book-case was closed and locked ; there was no air of *comfortable litter* and *untidiness* ; no lady's open work-box, tempting one to explore its mysteries ; no 'card-basket,' with its amusing variety of names, leading one on to interminable guesses as to the character, or appearance of the originals of these 'paper representatives.' The very stillness of the room became oppressive, as I sat in friend Miles's easy chair, and found nothing around me to disturb my meditations.

"As my eyes roamed round the small space, they were suddenly caught by a varied-coloured object upon the side-table ; I rose to look at it, and taking it up, discovered it was a travelling cap, which, although bearing marks of age and wear, had evidently been the work of some fair hand, and had boasted considerable beauty. I instinctively placed it on my head, and sat down again to muse. 'Ah ! ha !' quoth I to myself, 'I wonder which of the fair cousins friend Miles boasts of, gave him this *souvenir* ; I warrant it could not only "unfold" *one* "tale," but *many* of the scenes it has been taken to.' Just after this there was a strange buzzing in my ear, and at length I distinctly heard these words, 'I have no objection to tell you a few anecdotes of my career ; but I will not violate my master's confidence by narrating *all* the scenes we have entered together. To begin, then : Well do I remember the triumphant shake of my gold tassel, when, completed by the fair hands of a certain young lady, she placed me on the top of her dark ringlets, and for the first time my form was reflected in a looking-glass over the dressing-table in her *own* room. With a blush, and a smile, she then took me off, and wrapped me carefully in a sheet of

soft white paper, and then I was, to my terror and astonishment, placed in a dark receptacle, tied round and round, and hurried off, I knew not whither. Presently I felt I was thrust by a strong arm into a conveyance of some sort. Shrieks and groans seemed now and then to penetrate into my prison, especially when for a few moments we paused in our journey ; but at length it was brought to an end, and I was emancipated from my confinement by the eager hands of a gentleman, who viewed me with great pleasure, pressed me to his heart, and even k. . . . but no, I won't tell *that*. *He*, too, placed me on his head, and surveyed me in the glass, but somehow I thought I looked better on the lady's dark curls than on his ; however, I fitted him to a *t*, and arriving opportunely on the eve of a tour, begun my travels and adventures the next day.

" "Far away on the wide ocean was to be our destination ; but first we had a railroad journey, and very cosey my master found me, as I propped his head in the corner of the carriage. When we arrived at the end of our *land* progress, and commenced that by water, I was still sported with much satisfaction on the deck of a steamer, and many admiring looks were directed to *me*, which I half fancy my wearer took to himself. When we got out of the *river*, however, he was obliged very soon to quit the deck, and gladly exchanged me for head-gear of a very different appearance ; whilst he hung me up within sight, that I might not be ill-treated. After a few days' seclusion, my services were again in requisition, and both my master and I were complimented upon our re-appearance. There was one young lady, who seemed to take an especial interest in *both* ; and after a day or two's association on shipboard, she and Mr. Meredith became more intimate and confidential

than I at all approved ; the scarlet wool of my border seemed to assume a deeper hue with vexation, and my very tassel trembled with indignation when I heard him saying soft words to a comparative stranger, when *I* was on his head ; but when, in answer to some coquettish question of this new favourite, he dared to speak in a derisive tone of the fair creature from whom he had received *me*, I was so provoked, that I positively felt delighted when a stiff breeze, which had not long before sprung up, suddenly lifted me from his head, and flung me into the sea ! For some little time I was supported by my own buoyancy, and drifted away by the swell of the steamer to some distance, but soon I should have been at the bottom of the ocean, when just as I was sinking under the combined weight of terror and sea water, a dark object appeared close to me, it was one of the ship's boats ; my master's voice was heard exclaiming eagerly, "there it is ! pull away, boys !" and in another moment I was snatched from a watery grave, and gratefully squeezed (to get the water out of me), and pressed in my master's hands. His better feelings had been aroused at my loss, and what with those, and his drenched and dabbled appearance, he would not again face the fair cause of my disaster. Having caught a cold from this exploit (for he came bareheaded to my rescue), he did not leave his berth the next day ; and during those few hours, the vessel stopped at an intermediate port, and this dangerous young lady there landed. When we reached *our* destination, I had another narrow escape of losing my owner. Much confusion prevailed on quitting the vessel, increased by our having arrived late in the evening. I was lying very comfortably on a carpet-bag, when the support was suddenly withdrawn by a foreign servant, as I imagined him to be, who, by his

hasty movement, not only threw me on the ground, but remorselessly set his foot upon me, which accident gave me that crook in the button of my tassel, which I carry to this day. Away went the *laquais de place*, as I found he was, and left poor me on the dirty floor of the cabin ; several other persons entered at intervals, and carried away boxes, baskets, coats, or cloaks, but no one picked me up. Darkness and silence succeeded to light and bustle. I was alone—lost. How long I remained thus, I know not, but one morning I was most agreeably surprised to hear a well-known voice, saying, “I tell you I know it is here somewhere, for I had put it on my carpet-bag ready to wear it ashore, when that rascally Frenchman brought the one, without the other,” and here began a search, which terminated in my being once more restored to my owner, although my beauty had been sadly spoilt by the ill-treatment I had received.

“ We now passed a week or two pleasantly enough. Mr. Meredith was domesticated in the house of a very nice *French Englishman*, in the beautiful environs of the famed city of Bordeaux, and many a pleasant ramble we had together about the vine-clad summits. Mr. G. (excuse the initials) was a widower with three children, two of whom were daughters, and to the eldest of these my master again talked more nonsense than I liked to hear ; however, it soon came to an end, for my lady’s name was once uttered before the whole party in connexion with some other gentleman’s, and my master’s ears burnt so with rage, that it nearly turned the colour of my lining, and he quitted the place the next day. I will not trouble you with particulars of our continental progress, but merely mention, *en passant*, that I have accompanied my owner to balls and theatres, where I contentedly remained in his

great coat pocket until the gay scene terminated, and I was wanted to protect him from the night air. I have propped his head in French *diligences*, in German *eil wagens*, in Rhine steamers, in Russian *kabitka's*, and in English *bus's*; and except for short journeys, have never been left at home. Our last tour, however, very nearly did for me. We were travelling by railway, and had come a long distance that day. The journey and the daylight were both coming to a close, we were comfortably arranged in our favourite seat, back to the engine, face to the window, when suddenly there came a crash and a smash! my master was thrown forward by a sudden shock, and with the force out I flew at the open window, and was flung many yards on to the ground, amongst broken carriages, screaming women, and swearing men!

"Amidst the din I distinctly heard Mr. Meredith's voice, exclaiming, '*Hollo! old chap, who would have thought of finding you half asleep in my arm chair, with my old travelling cap covering your pate!*' The voice ceased, the vision fled, and starting up to greet Miles Meredith, who had roused me from my amusing dream, I soon after made him laugh heartily, in narrating the supposed 'Adventures of a Travelling Cap.'"

A hearty burst of merry laughter greeted the termination of John's *characteristic* "dream," which every body pronounced as a *probable* sketch of the progress of a gay bachelor.

"Indeed, John," said Julia, "it will be a useful hint to *me*, never to work travelling caps, or slippers, or in fact *any* 'gages d'amitié,' for your fickle sex; for 'Miles Meredith' is but a type of the tribe he represents. Half of you only *laugh* at the *giver*, even when making use of the *gift*."

"A libel, a libel," cried John; "it is only in a

dream such fickleness exists, and even there you see *constancy* prevailed. My hero was always ‘Miles the miserable,’ until his *much-loved* cap was in his possession.”

“ You acknowledge that *constancy* is a *dream* also,” laughed Julia ; “ so as the scales of justice are thus poised equally again, we will drop the subject.”

“ But now, Mr. Maitland,” said Julia, when the party were arranging themselves for the evening’s amusements, “ I hope you will remember your promise, and enlighten us as to your new game. What do you call it ?”

“ I really do not know what to call it,” he replied, “ we will try a round at it, and then determine its name.”

Some of the party wishing to look on, he arranged the rest with pen or pencils in hand, and strips of writing paper before each, and said, “ We will now divide our forces and our labours, thus—five shall each write a question in verse, the others must answer that question also in rhyme, and for an observation or moral to be appended, we will draw from the whole party.” He here took a piece of paper, wrote some lines on it, and passed to his wife, saying, “ Now, my dear, just answer that, it will show what I mean better than half an hour’s talk. Thank you,” he continued, taking it from her hand again, “ now I will add a moral, or whatever you may call it—there, now listen :—

Question.

“ ‘ Do those your censure or approval share
Who take an active part at Fancy Fair ?’

Answer.

“ ‘ How can I say I do not quite approve
Of what is often done by those I love ;
Hard and ungenerous it were to blame
Those whose sole, earnest, steadfast aim,

Is to do good. Although, I own,
I think more wisdom might be shown,
And more good done in other ways,
In these enlightened, active days.'

Observation or Moral.

"Let those who approve 'em go thither and buy,
Another's kind feeling may contrary tend;
To help a good cause we should each of us try,
If our *roads* are diverse, we all seek the same *end*."

"Thank you for the illustration, uncle," said Jane,
"we shall be able to understand now. Who are to be
the five querists?"

Before the question could be answered, Joseph
opened the door, and announced "Mr. Barnes," and
that gentleman's appearance caused a little interruption
to the matter in hand; he had come by agreement to
spend the evening, and Cameron was to return home
with him.

CHAPTER XV.

MR. MAITLAND'S "MORALS."—VARIATIONS.—RECAPITULATION.

MUTUAL inquiries after health having ceased, Mr. Barnes expressed a hope that his arrival would not disturb the amusement in which he found them engaged.

"We are about to try a new version of an old game," said Mr. Maitland, "to be something in the style of 'nouns and questions'; but perhaps not quite so difficult—will you join us?"

The circle again formed round the table, and their names having been written on slips of paper, five were drawn out to form the querists, who thus appeared as Mr. Maitland, John, George, Susan, and Miss Chapman. The remaining five patiently awaited the result of their appeal to the Muses, which proved very successful, as but a short period elapsed before the folded questions lay before them for their choice. Each person was bound in honour not to divulge the name of the writer, even if recognizing the hand-writing; and after contributing the required answers to the questions (some of which on perusing raised a smile on the lips of the silent reader), another lottery of names took place for the *moralists*, and the papers were soon refolded and replaced before Mrs. Graham. She promulgated their contents as follows :—

Question.

“ Come tell me, ye youths, or ye maidens so gay,
 Which pleases you most in the course of a day ;
 The morn which awakes you, with sun brightly shining,
 Or twilight’s soft hue, when that sun is declining ? ”

Answer.

“ Bright is the dawn of day
 To the earth’s beloved and blest,
 But brighter still is the ‘ twilight grey ’
 That whispers of coming rest ! ”

Moral.

“ In dawn of life, or dawn of day,
 Grateful rise to work or play,
 Youth enjoying,
 Time employing,
 Cheerful pass life’s early way.
 Age creeps on, the sun descending,
 Life and light to evening tending;
 Useful doing,
 Still pursuing,
 Each will radiant hues be blending.”

"That is a very pretty one," said the *listeners* ; but no guess was allowed as to the writers.

"Here is one not *quite* so sentimental," said Mrs. Graham, and she read :—

Question.

"On which do you prefer to rest your head,
A mattress, or a feather bed?"

Answer.

"In summer time, not liking too much heat,
I choose a mattress, covered by one sheet;
But when the winter comes, delighting to be snug,
A feather bed for me, two blankets, and a rug."

Observation.

"Goose down or wool,
Feathers or hair;
If one *sleeps*, warm or cool,
Not a straw should one care!"

"Now that's what I call real philosophy," said Cameron ; "I beg leave to cordially join in the sentiments of the 'Moralist.'"

"You used to be very fond of the spot to which the next question refers, my dear mother," observed Mrs. Graham, "so pray listen to the reply, and the observation thereon :—

Question.

"Has nature such charms,
That defying alarms
Of waves and of wind,
You could make up your mind
To cross the wide ocean,
With paddles in motion ;
And all for the sake
Of 'Killarney's' famed 'Lake?'"

Answer.

"I'm no enthusiast, and despise all blarney,
But much would give to visit sweet 'Killarney.'"

Observation.

“ ‘ Hope and wait patiently awhile,
 Perchance you’ll see the “sister Isle;”
 Science advances with so swift a pace,
 As to “annihilate both time and space;”
 Scenes inaccessible before,
 Tourist and author now explore;
 Friends from far distant hemisphere,
 Oft suddenly our vision cheer,
 And morn finds dear ones by our side,
 Whom eve saw Ocean’s foam divide—
 Steam ! to thy mighty power we owe,
 Many a comfort here below ! ’ ”

“ Very good, and very true,” observed Mrs. Beaumont; “we begin now to look upon swift transit, both by sea and land, as a mere thing of course ; and are so accustomed to the convenience of expedition, as to feel ourselves perfectly aggrieved if any delay occurs by which our progress is reduced to that *moderate* speed, which in our ancestors’ days would have been esteemed a most *dangerous* pace to travel.”

“ It is a ‘go-ahead’ age, my dear madam,” said John, “on both sides of the Atlantic ; nothing short of flying will suit the progressing spirit.”

“ But to return to the matter in hand,” said Mrs. Graham. “ I will now read you some very amusing lines :—

Question.

“ ‘ Do you think, as *some* do, that an Englishman’s face
 By a foreign *moustache* is improved ? ’ ”

Answer.

“ ‘ Except in the army, ’tis quite a disgrace,
 And I hope will ere long be removed.’ ”

Moral.

“ ‘ Pray spare the poor *moustache*, your ruthless razor stay,
 It but proclaims an ass, before we hear him bray.’ ”

"Really," said George, reddening, "that is rather a sweeping conclusion, and being an *anonymous* attack, not a very liberal one; but I dare say," he continued, laughing away his brief vexation, "that the observation was penned by some 'beardless boy,' who thereby expressed more envy than sincere judgment."

"Much the wisest decision to arrive at," said his mother, smiling. "Now follow some very pretty verses not obnoxious to any one," and she read—

Question.

"Which season of this changing clime,
Tell me in language clear, but brief,
You most prefer—the bright spring time
Or autumn's 'sere and yellow leaf?'"

Answer.

"Beautiful each in turn
Are the green and the changing bough;
Like the bloom on a fair young cheek,
And the grey on an honour'd brow!"

Moral.

"Tis truly so, if viewed with grateful hearts,
But thankless ones to all a gloom imparts,
'Tis the *mind's* sunshine, and the *spirit's* glow,
Tinges our prospects in this world below."

"We really have some poets as well as moralists amongst us," said Mrs. Beaumont. "I am quite sorry that the stock is exhausted."

"We will get up a few more for you, Granny," said George, laughing, "when we begin the *bouts rimés* I have promised to these poor creatures, who just now professed their inability to write verses."

"I think you are all getting so well into this game," said Mrs. Beaumont, "that it seems a pity not to continue it a little longer, instead of commencing any other. *Bouts rimés* will do to-morrow night."

"As Mrs. Beaumont wishes for another poetic specimen or two," said Mr. Barnes, "suppose we write a few *prose* questions, and choose three out of the number to put into a versified form, it will cause much diversity of idea and metre, all writing and moralizing on the same subject."

Out of this curious collection Mrs. Maitland took possession of a few, to retain as specimens for any future novices. The first of these ran as follows :—

Question.

"What do you think of love in a cottage?"

Answer.

"Bran in the bread, and leeks in the pottage.

Thank you, I'd rather
See your love farther."

Moral.

"Such fancies are pretty in youth, p'raps, but not age."

on which was a variation to this effect :—

Question.

"How would you like the lowly lot,
Affection's dream, of 'love in a cot?'"

Answer.

"Affection's *dream* it well may seem,
For half asleep the pair I deem,
Who this cottage of love,
Suppose as a glove,
Can be made to stretch to any extreme.
I, for one, would rather not
Try the chance of 'love in a cot.'"

Moral.

"If love be really worth its name,
A cot or palace were the same;
For *love* makes any place 'sweet home,'
From which its counterfeit would roam.
So when in life you wish to settle,
Be sure you choose the sterling metal!"

Another of these specimens gave the following good rules against the prevailing foible of gossiping, or talking too fast, at which some of the young ladies inveighed highly :—

Question.

“What’s the best way to govern the tongue?”

Answer.

“To be well whipp’d for chattering when you are young.”

Moral.

“Discreetly put, and I could name
A few adults to whom the same
Would do a world of good ;
Scandal would lose its poison’d zest,
Heart’s love uncheck’d, and nature rest,
If this were understood.”

upon which prolific theme another moralist thus expressed an opinion :—

Question.

“Can you advise, and say what *must* be done,
To govern tongues that will too glibly run ?”

Answer.

“If a male gossip—scorn his tittle tattle ;
If a dear female (bless her prattle),
Believe just half she’s ‘certain’ is quite true,’
Laugh at her foible, but avoid it too.”

Moral.

“With stolen goods, or stolen reputation,
Both need receivers to support the trade ;
Be *honest*, disappoint their expectation,
Slander and theft alike will be dismayed ;
No custom found for ‘home, or exportation,’
To keep on business each will be afraid.”

“I quite congratulate you, Mr. Maitland,” said Mrs. Beaumont ; “your pupils do ample justice to the teaching of their master. It is a very interesting diversity in our attempts as *feeling* poets.”

“Yes, I think so myself,” he replied ; “and friend

Barnes's *variations* on the original ‘*Theme*,’ gives an opportunity for much luxuriance of thought and opinion.”

“One evening before we go home,” said Susan, “I mean to propose a game to be called ‘Recapitulation,’ and to consist of a short example of each of the novel amusements which we have learned in the country.”

“Not a bad idea, Susan,” said her uncle, “for some *extra additionals* may suggest themselves during repetition, which will prove improvements also.”

Mr. Barnes and his young friend then took leave, with a promise of joining the party on Wednesday evening, after their return to Fernwood.

“I think, my dear children,” said Mrs. Beaumont, before she retired, “that Mr. Maitland’s idea of filling up an interval in the evening by the composition of a tale, is most excellent.”

“It is one that may be very easily carried out,” remarked that gentleman, “by way of a variety in home amusements; it exercises imagination and industry, and is only an *English* version of the ‘time-honoured custom’ of story-telling still practised in eastern climes.”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LETTER-BAG.—TING TANG IMPROVED.—BEN BLACK’S
SALMAGUNDI.

EVER since the Maitlands had been domesticated at the Grange, the postman had brought their bag there each morning, instead of delivering it at Fernwood; and upon opening it on the Saturday at the breakfast

table, a larger number of letters than usual were produced from its leathern compartments by Mr. Maitland: "Here are two letters for you, John," he said, "two for my wife, and even one for Jessie; surely all the people must have been seized at once with a *pen-and-ink-mania*, for my own letters are more numerous than usual!"

"There is nothing I enjoy more than the receipt of letters during the breakfast-hour," said Mrs. Beaumont; "it seems as if one's friends were partakers of that social meal when their thoughts are thus brought before us."

"Heaven sent letters to some wretches aid," replied Mr. Maitland, "so sings the poet; and Rowland Hill completed the bounty when he thought of the penny post. Well, John," he continued, "you seem to have received two good pennyworths. Are any of those closely written pages '*pro bono publico?*'"

"Quite intended for it," replied John. "My friends, young Black and White, knowing the clever circle I am domesticated with, have sent me some new charades, enigmas, et cetera."

"Are those *really* your friends' names?" asked Mary, doubtfully.

"Decidedly so," said John, "they were schoolfellows of mine, and from my staid appearance, we used to go by the names of Black, White, and Grey."

The idea of which *sobriquet* quite overset the gravity of the company.

* * * * *

"Well, what are we to do with ourselves this evening?" asked Mr. Maitland, after tea, music having agreeably filled up a portion of the previous twilight.

"Let us have one round at your 'Ting tang,'" said

John. "Our friends here have never tried it, and I fancy we might introduce a variety into it."

Mr. Maitland was then requested to begin the game, and gave the word "by" for them to rhyme to; the guesses as to his *thought-of* word proceeded thus:—

Mrs. Beaumont. "Is it what all the world must do at some period of their lives?"

Mr. Maitland. "You begin, dear madam, where others end; but it is not *die*."

George. "Is it what we read was once put before a king?"

Mr. M. "No, there's not a *pie* to open."

Jane. "Is it seven feet above the ground?"

Mr. M. "Sometimes more, but it is never *high*."

Richard. "Does a Scotch lassie sometimes go through it, and meet a body?"

Mr. M. "So sings the ballad; but it is not *rye*."

Susan. "Does it betoken thirst?"

Mr. M. "No, it is sometimes in a burning heat, but never *dry*."

Mary. "Is it what finishes the boy, and begins the youth?"

Mr. M. "No, lady fair, it is not so far down in the alphabet as *y*."

John.

"You say the word will rhyme with 'by,'
No doubt the sound is right,
If so, I think, 'twixt you and I,
'Tis what produces sight."

Mr. M.

"Thus varying the query throws quite a new light,
'Tis a pity your *eye* should be wrong, and not right."

Mrs. M.

"John's hint to take, a word I'll find,
Although produced from pain,

In bearing absent friends in mind,
I long to meet again."

Mr. M.

"Your ready wit such funds supply,
I gladly say—breathe not a *sigh*."

Mrs. Graham. "I must come back to humble prose, thinking your word is what I ought not to attempt with such clever competitors."

Mr. M. "Although not very wrong to do it, it would be so to say it; it is not *vie*."

Jessie. "Is it what Cardinal Wolsey once put before the king?"

Mr. M. "That is a mere variation upon George's question, I think."

Jessie. "No, indeed, papa, it is to show my *historical* knowledge, not my acquaintance with the 'nursery rhymes.'"

Mr. M. "Well, Jessie, then you have puzzled me; tell me what the Cardinal's dish was?"

Jessie. "It was '*I*', papa; do not you remember the expression, '*I* and the king,' which gave such offence?"

Mr. M. "Very fair, Jessie; but I am not quite so egotistical as you seem to fancy; I did not think of '*I* by myself *I*.'"

Julia. "Is it a word to be found in almost every conundrum?"

Mr. M. "Very frequently, but I cannot say *why*."

Miss Chapman.

"'Tis not guessed yet—I'll soar on high,
But do not think me proud;
With reverence I cast my eye
On *it* beyond the cloud."

Mr. M.

"Shame on my earthly feelings—fye!
I never thought about the *sky*."

Tom. "I can't manage poetry without thinking such a while ; so I hope it is what I don't mean to do."

Mr. M. "*Nil desperandum*, Tom ; but this time you would be wrong in your *try*."

Agnes. "Is it what Miss Harrison wishes to do ?"

Mr. M. "Ah ! I remember her wish ; no, not *fly*."

"I cannot make verses *impromptu*," said Julia ; "but I should like to inquire if it is what Mr. Harrison is always particularly anxious to have neat and clean ?"

Mr. Maitland. "Is Mr. Harrison a pig fancier, and you feel interested in the arrangement of the pig's domicile—*vulgo, a sty* ?"

Julia [*laughing*]. "Oh ! dear no, I was thinking of his nice white *tie*."

Mr. M. "That is not the only *tie* that clergymen are particular about ; but I had not thought of such a *knotty* point."

John.

"Another word—these being wrong—

I beg to offer you,

Though small, it still is very strong,

T' express a word untrue."

Mr. M.

"Truth and politeness mix in my reply,

I should quite blush to say it is a *lie*."

Mrs. Beaumont. "Is it close to us ?"

Mr. M. "No, it is not *nigh*."

Mrs. M.

"Fair Julia surely looked the word

When her last lively guess we heard."

Mr. M.

"No, dearest wife, I must deny

That Julia or my word are *sly*.

Miss Chapman.

“Remember, remember, the fifth of November,
Gunpowder, treason, and plot;
I think there's no doubt
Your word I've found out,
And you can deny it not.”

Mr. M.

“It would be treason
To truth and to reason
For me to deny
You have guessed my *Guy*.”

When Mr. Maitland thus acknowledged that Miss Chapman had guessed his thought, the approbation was general as to John's clever variety; but Mrs. Graham expressed a doubt as to whether it would be generally adopted.

“It is not every one who has the happy facility of forming rhymes *impromptu*,” she said, “which has been displayed by our friends this evening; but every one may play at ‘Ting Tang’ in its original form, and find it very amusing.”

“In a large party I should think there is very little doubt but what one or two *rhy mesters* (I will not say *poets*) may be found,” observed Mr. Maitland; “and if requested beforehand, to vary the game in this way when it came to their turn, a slight preparation would enable them to do it, by merely apprizing the other players that they intended to use such and such a word, therefore it must not be appropriated by any one else.”

“And even if the proposer of the word to be rhymed to were not as clever and quick at *repartee* as yourself,” remarked Mrs. Beaumont, “still he or she would have to exercise an extra degree of thought and ingenuity in divining the meaning of this versified answer.”

"Well then," replied Mr. Maitland, "we will say *chacun à son goût*, with my personal thanks to John for his suggestion."

His nephew here pulled a letter from his pocket, and unfolding it, said, "Let me now read you a few trifles from Ben Black's budget, which he truly designates as "a Salmagundi;" and first, young ladies, listen to

'THE NINE QUALIFICATIONS OF A BRIDE.'

'*Piety, Purity, Probity, Prudence, Patience, Placidity, Politeness, Punctuality, and Portion.*'"

"If any lady possessed all those qualities without any *set-off's*, I should think she might add a tenth *P*, and call herself Perfection," observed Mr. Maitland.

"And I was about to say," continued his wife, "that in the scale of precedence, the first and last very frequently change places."

"Aunt Maitland, you are very severe," said John. "I must resume my reading to prevent your further remarks. Here is a charade for you, short and pithy, pungent and poetical :—

'My first makes my second,
And then my whole is reckoned.'"

"A decided case of mystification," exclaimed Julia ; "pray enlighten us."

"Uncle Maitland will be pleased at the answer," said John ; "for he thinks that *Pat riot* are well put together."

"And too often obtain the *misnomer* contained in the word when complete," said his uncle.

"Try and guess this Anagram," said John :—

"Take a simple appellation,
Turn its form quite round-about,

A horse's handsome decoration
 You will quickly then find out.
 See, how strange, in change the third
 A disposition not to spend ;
 And stranger still, one little word
 In which our prayers should always end.”

“ That last expression gives the clue to the whole,” said his aunt, “ as ‘ Amen’ may be easily turned into ‘ name,’ ‘ mane,’ and ‘ mean.’ ”

“ Black sends a French sentimentality next,” said John, “ which I must write down, for you to understand and elucidate *le voici*. ”

“Pir	vent	venir
un	vient	d'un.”

Each of the party tried their powers of divination on this enigmatical phrase, and at length Mary successfully elucidated it by reading it thus,

“ Un *soupir*, vient souvent, d'un *souvenir*. ”

“ Here is a versified conundrum, without an answer appended,” said John, “ and I have puzzled for a solution in vain ; try your best endeavours :—

‘ When from the ark’s protecting bound,
 The world came forth in pairs,
 Who was it first that heard the sound
 Of boots upon the stairs ? ’ ”

“ That *is* a puzzler,” said George. “ Who knows when boots were first invented ? not I, for one.”

All consideration and guesses proving fruitless, the solution was postponed *sine die*.

“ *Con* the second, interesting ‘ to all England,’ ” resumed the querist. “ Why is Trafalgar-square like a grand review on a rainy day ? D’ye give it up ? Because it is a fine *site* spoilt ! ”

“ Very true in both cases,” said Mr. Maitland, laughing.

" Now, uncle, the next charade, my friend observes, 'gives a grand opportunity for the display of Romaic erudition,' so rub up your classics and give a guess :—

' My first is known to every nation
 That treads the shores of Hindostan.
 My second is a fair creation,
 But only of the mind of man.
 When Greek meets Greek in nuptial rite,
 My whole rejoices in the sight.' "

Mr. Maitland thought for a few minutes, and then said, " I have found it out, but it is not quite correct, I believe, in the pronunciation of the *first* part. It means 'paranymph,' the Greek word for 'the friend of the bridegroom,' but I have always seen the outcast Hindoo spelt either *Paria* or *Pariah*; however, it will pass."

" Ben seems to have rather a *penchant* for the *ark*," continued John, " at least I conjecture that first essay in ship building is here alluded to :—

' My first was the stay of a drowning world ;
 My next its maker must surely have been ;
 My whole is a name, which will hold its fame,
 While steam can labour or jennies can spin.' "

" We can all guess that," said Mr. Maitland, " for—

' Who has not heard of ' *Arkwright's* fruitless toil,
 Until his little son applied the oil.' "

" So ends Ben Black's collection," said John, refolding his letter, " with the compliments of the season to my talented companions."

" And very amusing it has been," said Mrs. Beaumont, rising to withdraw. " Your other friend's contribution we shall be glad of on Monday."

CHAPTER XVII.

NEW DRAWING LESSON.—BOOK OF FATE.—THE EXPECTED DINNER GUESTS.—THE BLUE BELLE.—DISHING.—AMERICAN GAME.

"No one who looks in upon our group of this morning can call this 'the castle of indolence,' I am sure," said Mrs. Beaumont, looking with benign satisfaction on the busy hands and cheerful faces around her, after breakfast on Monday morning. "It is more like a school of industry. But what are *you* doing, Richard?" she continued, as she observed him turning a piece of paper in various directions, and at last beginning to sketch upon it.

"I am about to try and form a figure of a man from the five spots you see here, dear madam," he answered, "which are to indicate the head, the two hands, and the two feet."

"But why did you place these points in such very extraordinary and almost unnatural positions?" asked the old lady.

"I did not place them," he replied; "but it is a tax upon my ingenuity Miss Chapman has just put in force. I will turn the paper, and you, Mrs. Beaumont, shall practise her experiment, and see the result."

He then picked up five little pieces of paper, which had been rolled up somewhat to the size and shape of peas, and placing them in Mrs. Beaumont's hand, requested her to scatter them on the paper. At each spot on which they fell he then made a small pencil mark, and although they had again assumed a most unpromising form, he laughingly assured Mrs. Beaumont that he hoped in a short time to "present her

with a very respectable-looking young man," from her accidental hints.

Waving back the curious group which pressed around his cousin, John said, "I will keep the ladies quiet for you by producing 'the book of fate,' which my friend, Will White, has sent down for the amusement and enlightenment of my fair friends. Come, then, young ladies, and, by choosing certain numbers, you shall hear divers secrets revealed, as to your character, your wishes, and your destiny."

Much amusement was afforded by this little book ; and after all had had their fortune told from it, John undertook, at Julia's request, to make a copy of it, to leave for her especial benefit when he should have carried off his friend's original to London.

When he had proceeded a line or two, he protested against the employment, as being of too quiet a nature. "If one of you would read it aloud," he said, "I could get on twice as fast, and not be obliged to stop my ears to all the agreeable *prattle prattle* around me. Come, Mary, be good-natured for *once*, and act as my dictator. It is not every one I would allow to assume that character," he added, as she prepared to comply with his request—and so was compiled the following

BOOK OF FATE.

What is your disposition ?

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1. Obstinate. | 9. Indolent. |
| 2. Satirical. | 10. Romantic. |
| 3. Gay. | 11. Sincere. |
| 4. Amiable. | 12. Modest. |
| 5. Extravagant. | 13. Obliging. |
| 6. Capricious. | 14. Impatient. |
| 7. Enthusiastic. | 15. Prudent. |
| 8. Constant. | 16. Jealous. |

What quality do you wish your husband (or wife) to possess?

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Economy. | 9. Gaiety. |
| 2. Affability. | 10. Goodness. |
| 3. Firmness. | 11. Talkativeness. |
| 4. Wit. | 12. Good temper. |
| 5. Benevolence. | 13. Humility. |
| 6. Placidity. | 14. Candour. |
| 7. Goodness. | 15. Charity. |
| 8. Caution. | 16. Industry. |

What do you ardently love?

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Music. | 9. Horse exercise. |
| 2. Botany. | 10. Admiration. |
| 3. Yourself. | 11. Money. |
| 4. The country. | 12. Poetry. |
| 5. Talking. | 13. London. |
| 6. Dancing. | 14. Display. |
| 7. Your own way | 15. Reading. |
| 8. Flirting | 16. Home. |

What are your present most anxious wishes?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. To be admired. | 10. To become an Author. |
| 2. To go to France. | 11. To travel. |
| 3. To hear yourself praised. | 12. To have (or make) an offer. |
| 4. To be rich. | 13. To build a church. |
| 5. To be accomplished. | 14. To be at the sea-side. |
| 6. To set the fashion. | 15. To have your lover's picture. |
| 7. To be married. | 16. To be buried in Westminster |
| 8. To keep a carriage. | Abbey. |
| 9. To gain a title. | |

For what are you beloved?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. For your money. | 10. I cannot imagine. |
| 2. For your excellence. | 11. For your artlessness. |
| 3. For your tenderness. | 12. For your generosity. |
| 4. For the graces of your mind. | 13. For your wit. |
| 5. For your own sake. | 14. For your worth. |
| 6. For your candour. | 15. For your accomplishments. |
| 7. Because no one can help it. | 16. Because you are a good |
| 8. For your beauty. | listener. |
| 9. For your brilliant talents. | |

Will you ever marry ?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Yes, when old. | 10. Before long I hope. |
| 2. No, you know better. | 11. When you have time. |
| 3. Yes, to make some one happy. | 12. A disappointment will deter |
| 4. You have no objection. | you. |
| 5. Yes, to please your friends. | 13. Better late than never. |
| 6. To be sure you will. | 14. No. |
| 7. No, no one will have you. | 15. Most assuredly. |
| 8. You will repent if you do. | 16. Perhaps, it is a chance. |
| 9. Yes, if you can. | |

“ Happily accomplished,” cried John, as he finished the last line as above. “ Now Julia, you shall have the pleasure of asking me the questions first by way of experiment, and let me hope I may obtain a good fortune as a reward for my exertions in your cause, so now begin.”

Julia. “ What is your disposition ? ”

John. “ Number six.”

Julia. “ ‘ Capricious ! ’ What quality do you wish your wife to possess ? ”

John. “ Bless her heart, number eleven.”

Julia. “ I very much question it. ‘ Talkativeness.’ ”

John. “ Defend me from it ! —go on.”

Julia. “ What do you ardently love ? ”

John. “ Number three.”

Julia [laughing]. “ ‘ Yourself.’ ”

John. “ Now, really it is too bad, I don’t believe you tell truly.”

Julia. “ Indeed I do. What are your present most anxious wishes ? ”

John. “ Thirteen.”

Julia. “ ‘ To build a church.’ ”

John. “ ‘ Some have honours thrust upon them.’ I never thought of such a thing before.”

Julia. “ For what are you beloved ? ”

John. “ Come, give me a cheerer. I will try number thirteen again.”

Julia. "I ought to cry out now that it is not fair,
the answer is so likely to be true. '*For your wit.*'"

John. "Spare my blushes, and proceed."

Julia. "Will you ever marry?"

John. "I hope so, when I have arrived at years of discretion, but what says the oracle? I choose number seven."

Julia. "Then the oracle crushes your hopes; for it replies, '*No; no one will have you.*'"

"I will be judged by every body present," said John, "whether this book of fate has not given an ungrateful return for all the trouble I have taken in compiling it."

"My dear cousin, I have felt your wrongs so deeply," said Richard, laughing, "that being unable to avenge them myself, I have sketched a champion from Mrs. Beaumont's scattered indicators, who stands sword in hand to fight your battles, if any one can be



found to meet him in the combat—look ! dear madam,” he continued, handing the paper to his hostess, “I have contrived to form a tolerable figure, and have left the spots distinct, to prove that I have abided by the rules Miss Chapman prescribed.”

Mrs. Beaumont took the drawing, and expressed much pleasure and surprise at the skill and ingenuity displayed in the formation of the figure, which in an easy but animated posture, represented a soldier engaged in an apparent attack upon an *unseen* enemy.

Every one joined in the praises bestowed upon this clever sketch ; and Mr. Maitland said, “ You do great credit to Mr. Day’s instructions, my dear boy ; persevere, and you will make a clever artist. You ought to thank Miss Chapman for her hint, and although every one may not be able to make such *telling* sketches from such strange beginnings, they may amuse every one and assist many.”

“ Are we all to play at being good little children, granny dear, and come in to dessert, as we dine before the seniors to-day ?” interrogated Julia, alluding to an intended dinner-party.

“ It would be rather a formidable accession to our numbers if you did,” returned her grandmother, smiling ; “ and as you are *all* rather too big to sit upon the knees of my dinner guests, and extra chairs would cause a great confusion, you must be kind enough to remember you have not yet *left the school-room* ; and so your governess will have you all awaiting our return to the drawing-room.”

“ It is quite delightful to feel oneself reckoned amongst the *young* people still,” said John, laughing.

The juniors were already assembled in the drawing-room, according to Mrs. Beaumont’s request, when

she re-entered it after dinner, accompanied by her lady guests, but the very speedy re-enforcement of the gentlemen, gave but short time for the inspection or individual notice of any of the party.

One of the ladies was a Mrs. Bell, an authoress of some repute, whom John accordingly designated as a "Blue belle," and the sight of her dress, of cerulean hue, made him now laugh at her *double* right to his *sobriquet*.

Her husband was very short, very thin, and very quiet, and some of his male friends had been heard to call him the "dumb bell."

After tea and coffee had been served, the Misses Harper were called upon for some music, the performance of which was, as usual, the signal for conversation to begin with great vivacity after the first six or eight bars, and only to conclude with the last chords of the overture, thence merging into a murmur of thanks and approbation, almost amusing to hear uttered.

Mrs. Graham then began to find various amusements for the rather numerous party, by getting up a rubber for an M. P. and a J. P. with their respective ladies, and a backgammon-board, chess-table, and "Tactics," were also furnished with their *vis-à-vis* couples. The piano received a performer or two at intervals, but still several remained unoccupied, and amongst them Madame la Clocke (the publishing title of the authoress).

"Shall we try a round at some of the paper verses you used to be so famous at?" said Mrs. Graham, addressing this lady, "Mrs. Maitland, and her nephew Mr. Harper, are very quick at them, and will be most proud to be joined with you in the game of 'Wit.'"

"I have never attempted any thing but the American game of "Nouns and questions," replied Mrs. Bell, "but shall be very happy to try whether I have lost my art even at that, for it is some time since I made the attempt."

A circle was then formed round the loo-table, some as active, others as mere *honorary* members of the "Wit club," and the writers were soon busily engaged concocting their questions, and afterwards supplying the single word at the foot of such question which the rules of the game require to be woven into the poetical reply to the question. Whilst all were thus occupied or employed, poor little Mr. Bell sat silently by the fireside, apparently as much "the world forgetting," as he was evidently "by the world forgot," until Julia happening to turn round, observed his listless inactivity, and good-naturedly resolved to try and arouse him. So tripping up to the little man, she inquired, "Will you play a game of chess with me, Mr. Bell, for want of a better partner?"

"Thank you, I don't play chess," was the reply.

"Shall we try draughts?"

"I would rather not play them, thank you."

"Backgammon?"

"I don't understand it."

Julia ran through the list of all the *tête-à-tête* games she could think of (some of which she could not play herself), but all in vain. At last, as a desperate resource, she said, "Will you try *dishing*?"

"I never heard of the game, but I will try to learn it, if it is not too difficult."

Her good-natured point thus gained, Julia flew off to obtain a draught-board, four of the black men, and one of the white. The former of these she placed on squares of their corresponding colour, at one end of

the board, as at draughts, and the single white man at the opposite end, also on a black square.

"Now, Mr. Bell," cried she, sitting down opposite him, "which will you choose, the single champion or his four opponents?"

"Whichever you please," replied the meek little man.

"Then I will take the single man," said Julia, laughing, "and now, this is the way we must play. The men move one square at a time, just as at draughts; the object of my man is to get past your four men, so as to be enabled to reach the other end of the board, and your endeavour must be to keep the line so completely, that I cannot pass it. If I do not do so, but you contrive to hem me in so that I cannot move, you '*dish*' me, to use the elegant phrase which gives the game its name; but if I *do* pass your line, if you once leave an opening that I can get through, I '*dish*' you. So now let us see which of us will be first to be dished."

Who shall say that there is any one living but what possesses some hidden spring of interest and sympathy, if one did but know how to touch it! Julia most unconsciously had awakened this interest in the little "dumb Bell," who became quite excited over this apparently trivial game, and rubbed his hands most gleefully, and quite laughed aloud, when at the third trial he was able to exclaim, "There, Miss Graham, you are *dished*."

Satisfied with having taught her quiet little friend something to amuse him, both for the present and future evenings, Julia now rose and joined the party at theloo table, from whence she sent Agnes to be Mr. Bell's partner.

"Have you finished your witty contributions?" she inquired of Richard.

" We have not all been writing," he replied. " There is sometimes more amusement to be derived as a spectator of other people's labours than as a fellow workman, but hush ! the papers are about to be unfolded."

" It is a thing of course, that you are to be the reader, Mrs. Graham," said John, addressing that lady, " you give all the emphasis so well, and as I know by grateful experience, sometimes supply both sense and sound."

Mrs. Graham bowed and smiled for the compliment, and then read paper the first :—

" " *Question.* " Is emigration a blessing or not ?"
Word.—" Neglect."

' Yes, better o'er the seas to roam,
 Than see your children perish here ;
 Hope, love, and health, can build a home,
 E'en in a distant hemisphere.
 But woe to those whose cold "*neglect*"
 Has snapt the ties of brotherhood,
 To Dives, in his purple decked,
 While Lazarus sighed for daily food.'

It is not allowable to guess at the authors, I believe," said the reader, as she concluded, " but those are exceedingly pretty lines, whoever wrote them. The next question and word are—

" " What is the difference between wit and humour ?"
 " Ruby."

' Wit is like the lightning flash,
 Humour like the moonbeam's ray ;
 Wit is like the torrent's dash,
 Humour like the fountain's play.
 Wit is like the "*ruby*" rare,
 Humour like the sterling metal ;
 Wit, the geyser of the north,
 Humour, the domestic kettle ! "

"That is a very good description," said Mr. Maitland, who had joined them from the backgammon table, "and good poetry too, only (to be hypercritical), the last line but one should have rhymed with *rare*."

"Oh ! but such poetic licences are quite allowable at this sort of game, I think," said Mrs. Bell. "We have great authority for such a departure from set rules in the concluding stanza of Campbell's beautiful ballad of 'Lord Ullin's daughter.'"

"I remember what you allude to," replied Mr. Maitland, "and bow to the example. Proceed, Mrs. Graham, if you please."

"Here is an inquiry which has been often answered in the affirmative," she continued, "and had the parties possessed the 'word,' it would have been a blessing :—

"Will you join a party to '*the diggings* ?'

"Contentment."

'The thirst of gold in man is strong,
It lures him o'er the seas to roam ;
To dare the pangs of parting long,
From friends, and country, health, and home.
On California's golden shore,
Hundreds pursue wealth-seeking toil,
But whilst "*contentment*" gilds my store,
I'll envy not their shining spoil.'

"A very good resolve, whoever made it," remarked Mrs. Beaumont. "What follows, Georgina ?"

"Rather a *favourite* inquiry," replied her daughter :—

"Which is preferable, spring or autumn ?"

'Noun.—"Wisdom."

'Each has its charms, yet must it be confessed,
The hope of summer lends to spring a zest
Denied to autumn ; for its beauties past,
Our minds with coming gloom are overcast.
Though "*wisdom*" teaches in the sunny hour,
Blithe to rejoice, nor dread the future show'r.'

"That's the true principle of enjoying life," said Mr. Maitland, "both as men and Christians."

"I have only one more paper to read," continued Mrs. Graham, "which seems both witty and true—

"*Question.* "What is the use of a pen?"

'*Noun.*—"Quaker."

'Use of a pen? how very strange!
What is there *not* within its range?
'Tis used to flatter, and to blame;
To eulogize, and bring to shame;
To chronicle some village news,
Accept a dinner or refuse.
Congratulate a married friend,
Condolence to a widow send;
Form treaties, too, with Indian men,
As did the "*quaker*," WILLIAM PENN.'"

By the time these "readings" were finished, the tray was brought in, and the company soon afterwards departed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

RETURN TO FERNWOOD.—THE DOUBLE DROSHKI.—THE HOUSE.—
INVITATIONS.—CONGLOMERATION REVISED.—THE WALK.—
ENGLISH VERSUS FOREIGN HILLS.—SECRET CORRESPONDENCE.

"FAREWELL! a long farewell to this old mansion," cried John, as on the following morning the preparations commenced for their return to Fernwood. "I do not remember ever having passed so thoroughly happy a fortnight as the last has been!"

By Mrs. Beaumont's kind and thoughtful arrangement, the party partook of an early dinner, before returning home ; and about three o'clock the old coach, with its strong pair of bays, drew up at the arched doorway, and was speedily followed by Mr. Maitland's pretty double-bodied pony phaeton.

"Here comes *my* carriage, in which I hope Miss Maitland will become my companion and guide to Fernwood," said George, gaily.

The vehicle to which he thus drew attention was a well appointed handsome-looking Russian double *droshky*, in front of which sat our old friend Ivān, skilfully guiding with his rein in each hand, one of his sleek and beautiful black steeds. Although not quite so striking a conveyance as the sledge, yet it possessed so much of attractive novelty in its appearance as to elicit much admiration. The bow over the horse's head which is fastened on each side to the shafts, and to which the bearing rein is attached by a silver hook, was furnished with several small bells, "more for ornament than use designed," as fortunately the necessity for scaring wolves (their object in the "far north") is not now needed in our happy land.

Obtaining her mamma's permission, Jessie yielded a willing assent to George's proposal, and the cavalcade prepared to start.

Kind wishes and adieus were again and again exchanged ; but Mrs. Beaumont checked the more serious farewells offered by the Harpers, by saying : "No, no, my dears, you have not done with the old woman yet. I shall come to Fernwood before you leave, and then we will say good-bye."

And now the carriages being all ready, amidst smiles and tears, nods and bows, the party drove away.

"I hope, George, you have not quite forgotten Fernwood during your absence?" asked Jessie of her companion.

"On the contrary," he replied, "I have always carried a perfect recollection of its noble proportions and elegant design, as a guide to my own taste, if I should ever build a house."

The carriages here turned into the drive, the numerous large hollies, Portugal laurels, rhododendrons, and clumps of mountain ash in which, formed a thicket of verdure and variety even at this inclement season of the year. There was not much space between the arrival of the respective equipages, and their occupants were soon transferred to the comforts of a thorough English home.

"Here are some letters awaiting our return, I observe," said Mr. Maitland, walking up to the centre table; "these delicate pink-tinted notes are invitations, I presume; take yours, Susan and Julia."

"Invitations to a friendly party at the Pembertons, on Thursday evening, aunt," said Susan.

"Having no previous engagement, we will of course go," observed her aunt. "Mrs. Pemberton is the widow of our late incumbent, and they are very nice people, but very quiet; they have no piano, so you will have neither music nor singing at the Mount."

After tea, John proposed a carpet quadrille in the small drawing-room, to celebrate their return to Fernwood, which concluded, his uncle said, "Now, young folks, a truce to active sports for a while, and let me tell you of an idea that occurred to me this morning, for a different way of playing Jane's game of Conglomeration." The young folks sat down as he requested, and prepared to listen and obey. "It strikes me," he resumed, "that it would cause more amuse-

ment if each party was obliged to write upon the same words. The chief entertainment arises from the clever, humorous, or even bungling introduction of the specified nouns, and I think it will show more variety of style and character, if we are each obliged to use the same. At any rate let us try."

The proposition was adopted forthwith, but as some of the party drew back, and declared they did not feel "*up*" to composition that evening, the authors were finally settled, as Mr. and Mrs. Maitland, John, Mary, Susan, and Richard, who immediately gave forth in turn, a "noun" for insertion at the head of each paper, which stood thus in order :—

"Trouble," "Grief," "Silver," "Curiosity," "Mushroom catsup," "Polka."

"King George shall be our monarch of the game, and read our productions aloud," said John; "so now, good folks, get something else to do besides looking at us, or you will find the time required for composition appear very long."

This hint produced chess-men, backgammon-boards, and work-baskets, until in about twenty minutes "the King" was called to receive the contributions of his willing subjects, who had not however produced them without many murmurs at the extraordinary word of "mushroom catsup," which John had mischievously introduced, without knowing more about it, than that sundry bottles in the oilman's shop windows bore that title. The whole party drew round to listen, and George thus began :—

"'Tis hard with "*trouble*" to commence,
And p'rhaps find no relief,
Though if we are possess'd of sense,
'Twill help to conquer "*grief*";"

Take “*silver*” pencil-case in hand,
 Write verses with velocity,
 I warrant some from out our band
 Will prove a “*curiosity*.
 That “*mushroom catsup*,” what a word,
 A poet’s line to fill !
 The “*Polka*” is much less absurd,
 Or elegant quadrille.
 But as my “*lotted task*” is done,
 I’ll not add any more,
 Except record, that I for *one*,
 Rejoice the task is o’er.’

The next paper,” he continued, “ professes to set forth the feelings of—

‘AN ANGRY MISTRESS.’

“ Here’s scolding and anger, here’s “*trouble*” and “*grief*;” Nancy’s mistress declares she can prove her a thief :—
 “ I gave you some ‘*silver*’ to go with to town,
 Various articles thence, ma’am, to buy and bring down,
 And now it appears you have had the *owdosity*
 To spend it instead on your own ‘*curiosity*.
 The nice ‘*Mushroom Catsup*’ I yesterday boiled,
 For want of the corks will be probably spoiled.
 You have not brought the shoes for my daughter, Miss Mary,
 Nor yet the new milk pans, to put in the dairy.
 Mary can’t dance the ‘*Polka*’ to-night in thick shoes ;
 These troubles have come because you, ma’am, must choose
 To spend all my money at Darlington fair !
 Get away, you bad girl ! I shall scream, I declare ! ”

“ Poor woman ! ” said George, “ what a pack of troubles her naughty Nancy caused her. What are you doing, Mary ? nay, that is too bad,” he continued, trying to take out of his sister’s hand the papers she had begun to tear up ; but she was too quick for him, and the fragments lay upon the table.

“ Indeed, George, we could not manage anything at all readable,” she said in excuse ; “ that extraordinary

word of John's, and Mrs. Maitland's '*silver*,' to which every one knows there is no rhyme, so completely puzzled us, that Richard, Susan, and I, gave up the attempt in despair; but you have another paper to read, have you not?"

"One more," replied her brother, "called—

'THE SATISFIED BACHELOR.'

"What causes us the greatest "*troubles*,"
 What the most poignant "*grief*,"
Love or marriage? bubbles! bubbles!
 For these there's no relief.
Yea! "*silver*" oft our cares decreases,
 And gives to love a charm;
For poverty, the proverb teaches,
 Sends love off in alarm.

* * * *

Pondering thus some weeks ago,
 I had the "*curiosity*,"
To an old married man I know,
 To say, with some pomposity:
"Just let me at some items look
 In your good lady's diary,"
He smiled, and brought a well fill'd book,
 Sufficient for a Friary.
I glanc'd it o'er, how queer did mix
 The things I saw therein,
To "Mushroom Catsup," one and six,
 "One pound for Felerine,"
"Gingerbread three-pence," "Cab to town,"
 "Mercer (an old account)
Six pounds," "new 'Polka' half a crown,"
 "Sundries to bal account."
I shut the book with mute disdain,
 Content a Bach'lor to remain!"

"I really think we have all managed tolerably well to get over John's *stickler*, as he would himself call it," said his aunt. "And your idea of its being more *amusing* to play the game this way, my dear," addressing

her husband, "is quite correct, for as the intention of the game is to furnish amusement, rather than *edification* or improvement, the more ludicrous the examples, perhaps the better."

"Being a decided encouragement to my 'Mushroom Catsup,' or any other *sauce* I may choose to give you, aunt," said the inveterate punster, John.

The next morning was bright and clear, and the youthful party enjoyed a long walk in the exhilarating neighbourhood of Fernwood, where the diversity of hill and dale furnished beauty to the eye, and required activity in the limb.

"This is rather different from our prescribed walk in London," said Jane, laughing, as she run down a steep green declivity in one of the fields ; "some of our friends there would stare to see us in such full chase."

"Yes, we shall miss the country exercise, as well as the country air," sighed John ; "but we must make the best of it. It is a pity that we cannot have ice hills in a *house*, for then one might manage that novel diversion without the outdoor space, which is so seldom to be found in a *town* residence."

"You *might* have it within doors," said Mary, "if you had a room high enough to give a good descent. We used to see them at the emperor's country palaces round St. Petersburg."

"Do you mean that?" asked John, in surprise ; "how were they made?"

"Oh ! George can tell you all about it," she replied, "for he superintended the commencement of a *hill* for my uncle, Sir Thomas Graham, before we left Devonshire."

"Hollo ! George," cried John to his friend in advance, "come back here, that's a good fellow, and tell us something about these indoor icehills, which Mary

says you gave your uncle the idea for. What are they like, and where did you put them?"

"To answer your questions in order," replied George, "in the first place they are not *ice* hills at all ; and secondly, they are *like* those erections in *form*, but not in material ; and thirdly, they were put up by my uncle in a large granary or barn, standing next to his stables and coach-house, which he had cleared out and whitewashed for the purpose."

"Ah ! we have nothing of that sort in London," said John, "and so your description will not profit us much, individually ; but tell us more about it, that we may enlighten others, who possess the *means* as well as inclination to apply them."

"The hill is formed of planks of wood, about four feet wide," continued George, "and it depends upon the height of your building what length your slide is. At the emperor's small palace at Tzarsco Celo, near Petersburg, the frame and wooden road are formed of mahogany, beautifully polished, and the height at which the slide begins is perhaps eighteen or twenty feet from the ground, to which you mount by a most elegant little spiral staircase at the side. We did not do things quite in such style at Combe Hall, but our framework and planks were of good strong deal, painted oak colour, with steps attached to one side, like a ladder, but not left open between. The road for the sledge to travel on is marked out something like a railway, only that there are two pieces of narrow iron stand up instead of *one*, which thus forms a *groove* for the sledge, and it cannot but travel in safety to the ground, where the same guides are continued for a few yards, that the *impetus* may be checked before the sledge finally stops ; too sudden a stop would be apt to overset this small vehicle."

"I dare say it is very good fun," remarked John, "but not so exhilarating as the *real* Russian hills."

"But it is a very good substitute," said George, "and I think ought to be added to the *gymnasium* of every large school."

The end of this conversation found them nearly at home, where their long and pleasant walk made the announcement of dinner very acceptable.

As they drew round the fire in the afternoon, Mrs. Maitland said, "Whilst you were absent this morning I employed part of my time in sorting and looking over some of the miscellaneous contents of my 'Omnium Gatherum,' and amongst other 'curiosities for the ingenious' I found this specimen of 'secret correspondence,' which I thought might serve both to amuse and inspire some of us. This letter is supposed to have been addressed to an intimate friend, by a young lady, whose husband always read her correspondence before he allowed it to proceed to its destination."

She then read the letter, which gave a glowing picture of the young lady's happy matrimonial life, quite cheering to all hymeneal aspirants; but when she explained the *double entendre*, by only reading every alternate line, the exact reverse of the previous description, was quite as much calculated to damp all wishes of entering the state of wedlock; and raised both the surprise and mirth of the uninitiated.

"I agree with you, aunt, that it would be possible to appropriate and act upon that idea," said John; "come, let's have a try now, before the light quite fades away." All the rest, however, declined his challenge, and John withdrew alone to a small writing table at the window, where, resolutely shutting his ears to the conversation near the fire, he collected his

thoughts, and soon threw them on paper, in an amusing form. "Now, good folks," he said, "be lenient in your criticisms, and hear me read a very pleasant letter my friend old Mr. Lovepenny had from his son, whom he had placed at a cheap Yorkshire school:—

'My dear Father,

'I avail myself of your permission to write to you, and do not hesitate to open my whole heart to you, well knowing you will wish for my account of school, where I have now been long enough to form an opinion, I hasten to tell you what I really think of my master. I find him kind and considerate, but others say that he is exceedingly harsh, cruel, exacting, and unjust. Perhaps they call him so who deserve severity, but to me, it would be difficult to find one more kind and attentive, so unlike some men, who are capricious, tyrannical, selfish, and severe.

'Some of the boys complain most unjustly, that we have not good food, nor even enough of it; but, indeed, my dear father, it is not true that we either have bad meat, or are half starved. My tasks are easy, and although it is natural that I long for the holidays, to see those who love me, yet school is more like home to me than otherwise, and I shall be nearly wild to return here.

'Letters from you are, of course, always welcome, so pray do write to me immediately, and tell me if you are not delighted with my abode here, and whether you are not thoroughly disgusted to find boys capable of so falsely and wilfully representing that such deceit, wickedness, and cruelty can exist in my dear and respected master, Mr. Whackem, who is a man who only requires to be really known to disprove these statements, and show his accusers to be despicable in the eyes of all good men.

'Your affectionate, but never

'your unhappy son,

'LAUNCELOT LOVEPENNY.'"

"A very good imitation, John," said his uncle, when his nephew had read the letter in its two different significations ; "but just let me look at it. Oh ! yes," he continued, glancing it over, "it is all right, you *each* time read the top line, and in your *double entendre*, skip the alternate one, I see ; I suppose that the *key* to this 'secret correspondence' had been agreed upon before young Lovepenny was sent to this establishment ; a sort of *Dotheboys Hall*, I should imagine, by some of the allusions ; but here are Barnes and Cameron, so now let us have tea."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CONCERT.—LES BOUTS RIMES.—A COUNTRY VISIT.—
PRACTICAL PUZZLES.—HINTS FOR DIPLOMATISTS.—CONUNDRUMS.—NEW CYpher.

THE absence of their elder play-fellows from home had been a great source of grief to Alice and Charley, and their joy at their return was proportionably great. The Grahams were particularly fond of children, and had a happy knack of entertaining them, and winning their regard.

"Let us have a game at something this evening in which these little folks can join before they go to bed," said Julia, good-naturedly. "Come George, Richard, all of you, what shall we play at ?"

"There is so little room in *modern* drawing-rooms for active amusements," said Mr. Maitland ; "can you not think of a merry sitting down game ?"

"Have you ever tried 'a concert?'" asked Jane, "where each one chooses an instrument, and is *supposed* to play upon it at the command of the leader? It makes it much more amusing for it to be *vocal*, instead of silent. John makes a capital leader, and I think Alice and Charley would enjoy this fun."

The *performers* were then requested to choose their instruments, and John, moving a music-stool from the piano, placed himself on it, as the leader and conductor of the proposed concert. In so large a party it required some ingenuity to remember the names of a sufficient number of instruments, but at length all were *supposed* to be supplied, and John, clapping his hands, as the pre-concerted signal for the *whole* orchestra, commenced singing the well-known huntsman's chorus in "Der Freischutz," to which the *band* responded, all *apparently* playing their several instruments of harp, piano, flute, violin, trumpet, violincello, *et cetera*. In the midst of which the *conductor* held forth his outspread palms, and ere the silence which succeeded this signal had endured a *second*, his quick imitation of the violin, succeeded almost instantaneously by the piano, thence flying to the ophicleide back to the *whole* band, and thus keeping them all in the greatest state of exercise and excitement, caused the chorus of voices more frequently to be a ringing laugh of merriment, than the intended tones of Weber's composition. A quarter of an hour's *hard work* at this amusement found almost all the party quite tired with their exertions, and Alice and Charley laughing till the tears ran down their cheeks at "cousin John's funny way."

Their mamma therefore begged the "concert" might terminate for the evening, and when, soon after these youngsters said "good night," she reminded her

husband that “Mr. Barnes and his friend had promised to join the ‘children of a larger growth’ in a trial at the game of ‘bouts rimés,’ proposed by George before they left the Grange.”

Some of the party then commenced their literary labours, and in a short time George having “gammoned” poor Susan most unmercifully at the Polish game of backgammon, came forwards to receive and read their efforts.

“Must I read the given rhymes *alone* first?” he asked.

“No,” replied Mrs. Maitland; “only keep each together that are written on the same rhymes, it will show the design of the game better than by reading first from one set and then from another.”

George then took up the papers which laid together, and read them in the following order:—

“THE BACHELOR UNCLE.”

“Now the baby’s brought in to exhibit her *charms*,
And dances, and crows in the old nurse’s *arms*,
It’s really amusing to note their *delight*,
As nurse and mamma, all her doings *recite*;
Martha’s visage lights up with a wintry *ray*,
As she tells how her darling will fondle and *play*;
‘She’s sure to be beautiful, sure to be *wise*,
All doubts on the subject, Sir, *I* should *despise*,’
But ‘the bachelor uncle’ dislikes this *display*,
And crossly exclaims, ‘that’s enough for *to-day*.’

Poor Martha!” laughed George, “how unkindly her pleasing prognostications were snubbed. But what have we here?—

“THE AMOROUS USHER.”

“Aid me, oh! muse, to sing my Sophy’s *charms*,
(Be quiet boys) her lovely rounded *arms*;
Her ruby lips, her voice, my heart’s *delight*,
(Sir, I’ve my Latin verses to *recite*). ”

Her azure eye, that beams with softest *ray*,
 (Boys will you learn, and not leave off to *play*) ;
 She is not only beautiful, but *wise*,
 (It seems that all my threat'nings you *despise*) ;
 Modest, she shrinks from all unmeet *display*,
 (Confound you, boys, I'll flog you all *to-day*) ! ”

A hearty laugh chorussed this last poetic effort, which, from the arch looks directed to John, was evidently supposed to have emanated from him. He, however, really looked *innocently* unconscious; and, glancing round the group, detected such a tell-tale blush upon his sister Jane's cheek, that although he *kept* her secret, he felt certain that he had discovered it.

“ I pass now to my second edition,” said George—

“ ‘THE JEALOUS LOVER.’

“ ‘I'll watch them ! see ! he leads her quite *apart*,
 A coxcomb ! can he hope to touch and win her *heart* ?
 If she be faithful, all his arts are *vain*,
 To shake her truth, and her affections *gain*.
 But who can tell the chances of an *hour* ?
 Who count of wealth, and rank, the tempting *pow'r*,
 When placed in bright array before her *view*,
 Will she to poverty, and love, be *true* ?
 I'm half distracted by my doubt and *fear*,
 I fain would fly, and yet must linger *here*.
 Again I see them—ah ! hope buds *a-new*,
 She coldly bends—he bows a vex'd *adieu*.’

That seems as if it came from the heart,” said George, jokingly. “ Did *you* write these moving lines, Cameron ? ”

“ Our motto is ‘ sub silentio,’ ” replied his friend, “ so ask no questions, but read on.”

George obeyed, by commencing—

“ ‘THE GIDDY SCHOOL-GIRL.’

“ ‘Nay, Charlotte, I must sit *apart*,
 I cannot get these lines by *heart*,

You talk so much, it is in *vain*,
 I must recite them o'er *again*.
 Pray can you tell me what's the *hour*?
 Twelve! then it is not in my *pow'r*.
 What is it in the square I *view*?
 My dearest uncle? it is *true*;
 My governess I need not *fear*,
 I shall not stay much longer *here*.
 How I do long for something *new*!
 Hark! I am called'; dear girl, *adieu*.'

Just like a school-girl," said George, mischievously; "always wanting to do something different to what she is told to do! But these last lines, on the same rhymes, seem quite touching. They appear to have been suggested by that beautiful picture of Cromwell sitting by the bedside of his dying daughter, and are entitled—

'MRS. CLAYPOLE.'

"With heaving chest, and lips *apart*,
 (For death is busy at her *heart*)
 Lies one who strives (alas! in *vain*)
 A father's confidence to *gain*;
 To win him in this awful *hour*,
 Back from ambition's iron *pow'r*.
 She bids him all his deeds *review*,
 Be to his God and country *true*.
 'Father,' she says, 'repent and *fear*,
 Not long do mortals sojourn *here*;
 Soon we are called, where all is *new*,
 Where kingdoms profit not. *Adieu!*'"

Now that is really poetry!" continued George, admiringly, "and I see others appreciate it as well as myself. But I hope the remaining couplets are not quite in such a lachrymose strain. The first seems promising :—

“‘ Bless me ! I fear we shall begin to *tire*,
 This taxes too much our poetic *fire* !
 We must be surely quite a rhyming *party*,
 Our zeal, too, in the cause, appears most *hearty*.
 But I will ask, if I may be so *bold*,
 Is there not fear that zeal will soon grow *cold* ?
 Each thinks the other beats his efforts *hollow*,
 Disgust, and weariness, will shortly *follow* !
 I must confess I wish no person *harm*,
 But hope they’ll stumble at that odious *farm*.’

Ha ! ha ! ha !” laughed George. “ I am sure I should have stumbled at that ‘ odious farm ;’ how has the writer of these *last* lines got over the difficulty ?—

“‘ In making verses we don’t seem to *tire*,
 But keep up steadily a good brisk *fire* ;
 As round the table our small social *party*
 Begin to work with energy most *hearty*.
 Some write with trembling nerves, and others *bold*,
 Some rather idle, perhaps lukewarm, or *cold*.
 But Mrs. Maitland always beats us *hollow*,
 I wish we all may in her footsteps *follow* ;
 For then, perchance, we shall not come to *harm*,
 But if we do, retire to our *farm* !’

I am very glad that the writer of this effusion has the opportunity of enjoying his *otium cum dignitate*,” said George, as he concluded the perusal ; “ in case he should fail as a poet, he may try the agriculturist.”

“ Well, what do you think of *bouts rimés*, Barnes, now you have tried them ?” asked Mr. Maitland.

“ I am quite astonished at myself,” he replied. “ I had no idea that I could have tacked anything like sense to ready-made rhymes.”

“ And since I have heard some really good poetry made out of such materials,” said Mrs. Maitland, “ where genius seems at first ‘ cribbed, cabined, and con-

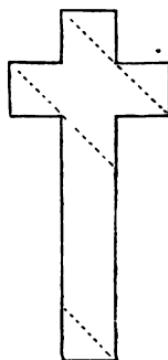
fined,' I am less sceptical than I used to be, at the sincerity of the sorrow expressed by Monsieur Dulot at the loss of his 'blank sonnets,' as he called them, the imitation of whose curious practice of writing the *ends* of his verses first, gave rise to this amusing entertainment."

* * * * *

After a morning spent in pleasant employment and exercise, our young friends agreed to follow country fashions, and *walk* up to 'The Mount,' which was only a short mile across the fields.

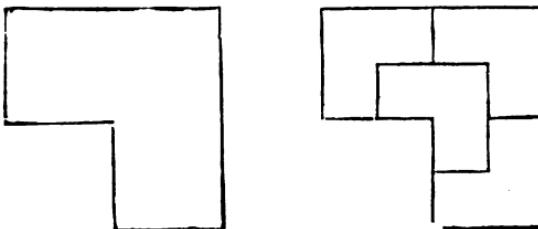
In the drawing-room they found, besides the amiable hostess and her son and daughter, Mr. and Miss Harrison, Mr. Barnes and young Cameron, and a middle-aged gentleman of the name of Webster, who resided in London, and was spending a week with his late friend's widow.

Soon after tea the amusements of the evening began, which consisted principally of puzzles and riddles. Some of the former were very good practical ones. One given by James Cameron, consisted of a piece of paper in the shape of a cross, which he then divided by only *three* cuts of the scissors (although it thereby

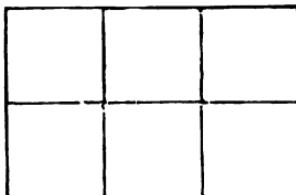


formed six pieces of paper), and the puzzle was to place them together again in their original form. John took an illustration of this in his pocket-book, and also of several others given by Mr. Webster and Mr. Harrison.

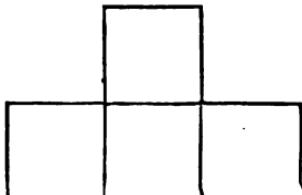
There was one which represented three-fourths of a



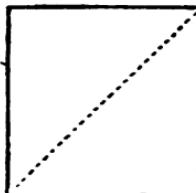
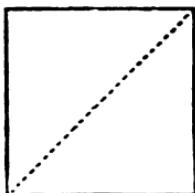
square, cut in a peculiar way, which caused much puzzling as to how four pieces, all of the same shape and size, were to be formed out of it. Mr. Webster also showed them one in which he arranged six hollow



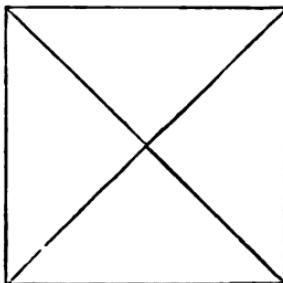
squares upon the table (formed ingeniously from cedar spills cut in half), and then desired them, by removing five pieces, to leave three whole squares ; and another



of two exact squares of paper, which it was required



to cut into two such parts, that when all four parts were joined together, they should make *one* square.



The boxes of bone alphabets were also called into requisition very amusingly, and enabled the Pembertons to show some clever (but to the majority of the party well known) anagrams, which proved very satisfactorily that "moonstarers" and "no more stars" equally represented "Astronomers;" that "new door" literally made "one word;" that "great helps" truly designated "Telegraphs;" that "sly ware" wittily described "lawyers;" that "Johnny the bear" was another term for "John Abernethy;" and that "Golden land" applied not to California but to "Old England."

"One might make out another mode of 'secret correspondence,' John, from these suggestions," said his uncle ; and then turning to Mr. Webster, he recounted

the performance of his nephew in that art, which he had shown for their amusement the previous day.

"Some years ago," said Mr. Webster, "I was much interested by the cypher said to have been used by Buonaparte during his eventful campaigns, the key to which was changed each time ; that appended to the foot of one dispatch, always referring to another which had been sent previously."

"That was a most ingenious idea for a cypher," remarked Mr. Maitland, "I never saw it."

"I made one or two of my own upon the same plan," resumed Mr. Webster, "and, indeed, in writing to my brother-in-law, who is consul general at ——, I always use them alternately for any *official* communication. I have them up-stairs in my writing-case at this moment, and will show them to you." In a few minutes these curious accessories to diplomacy were placed before the party, and caused them great amusement. "Now, I cannot let you have *my* keys," said Mr. Webster, laughing, "or you will perhaps unlock some state secrets, which ought to be kept quite strictly ; but I will tell you how you may form ciphers for yourselves, if such a wish occurs to you."

"I shall be much obliged for your instructions," said John.

"You must, then, choose some short pithy sentence for your 'key,' which will have all the letters of the alphabet contained in it," said Mr. Webster, "and I will show you how to arrange them."

"You will not have time to do it *secundum artem* to-night, so come to Fernwood in the morning, and make our early dinner your luncheon," said Mr. Maitland, which his new acquaintance agreed to do ; and hen turning to Miss Harrison, he said, "Do you know his conundrum ?—

'What ladies with a grace may do ;
What without art, looks well on *you* ;
What every man who has a wife,
Submits to for a quiet life !'

Being an old married man myself, I can answer for the latter part, and with such a fair bevy before me, the first is equally clear."

Many were the unsuccessful guesses at his conundrum, which he at length told consisted in the simple word "*anything*."

"Is it true that you and your sisters leave Fernwood on Saturday?" inquired Miss Harrison of John.

"Unfortunately too true," he replied. "My mother has written to remind us of our promise, and made engagements conditional on its fulfilment, so we *must* go. *Apropos*," he continued, turning to Julia, "do you know what oil is the best to apply to locomotive engines?"

"You could not have asked a worse person," she answered; "I know nothing whatever of mechanics."

"I will put it to the company generally, then," said John, but not getting any satisfactory answer, was found out in its being a conundrum of his own making, when he gave the solution as "*Train oil*," and ended his witty contributions by answering the request for another, in the words—

“‘ My first is a company,
• My next shuns a company,
My third calls a company,
And my whole amuses a company.’ ”

Miss Harrison guessed this "co-nun-drum," and the party soon afterwards broke up.

True to his promise, Mr. Webster was at Fernwood by an early hour, and he and John soon sat down to the compilation of a Cypher Alphabet.

"I have tried one or two sentences to contain all the letters," said the latter, "and think this one will answer for you to show me the plan."

Mr. Webster assented, and drew out the following tables, writing the key at foot:—

Alphabet.	Cypher.	Cypher.	Alphabet.
A A		A A	
B D		B T	
C Z		C N	
D E		D B	
E S		E D	
F M		F M	
G L		G Y	
H K		H U, V	
I, J I, J		I, J I, J	
K N		K H	
L O		L G	
M F		M F	
N C		N K	
O R		O L	
P X		P W	
Q Q		Q Q	
R U, V		R O	
S Y		S E	
T B		T Z	
U, V H		U, V R	
W P		W X	
X W		X P	
Y G		Y S	
Z T		Z C	

Adze, a small kind of crooked axe, equally used by shipwrights and coopers.

"And now, to make use of your cypher," continued his instrucuter, "let us write a sentence, such as would be likely to occur in a letter, and then put it into cypher; for instance, 'write immediately you receive this'; now look to your cypher, and see how the letters stand which compose this; *w* in the alphabet is *p*

in the cypher ; write it on your paper ; *r* is *u*, *i* is *i*, *t* is *b*, *e* is *s*, and so on ;” he then added all the other words in the same way, and the sentence thus appeared in the unpronounceable form of “*puibe iffseabog grh vszsihs bkiy.*” “I hope you understand it now,” he said ; “in composing fresh keys you have only to follow the same rule of finding a sentence comprising *all* the letters of the alphabet, and in forming your cipher you of course exclude any that occur twice over.”

“ You have made it quite clear to me now,” said John ; “ I am to look in the *alphabet* for composition, which shows me what the letters become in cypher, and I am to use the cypher column for translation, which gives me the alphabetical letter back again.”

“ Quite right,” said Mr. Webster, rising from the table, and approaching that where the ladies of the party were seated at work ; “ and now I must be saying good morning.”

CHAPTER XX.

THE LAST EVENING AT FERNWOOD.—MRS. GRAHAM'S VERSES.—
ENCOURAGEMENT TO ARTISTS.—OLD FRIENDS AND NEW GAMES.
—THE LAST SONG.—A FRIENDLY FAREWELL.

ABOUT four o'clock in the afternoon Mrs. Beaumont's coach was discerned coming up the drive, and in a few minutes she and her daughter, accompanied by Miss Chapman, had been added to the social group. “ You see, my dears,” said the cheerful old lady, “ I have fulfilled my promise of coming to say good bye ; is it still determined that you leave to-morrow ?”

"Yes, dear madam," said Susan, "we must not disappoint mamma ; we shall quit dear Fernwood, and the Grange, with much regret, but the remembrance of the pleasure experienced at each will endure beyond the pain of parting."

"The parting *must* come," said John, "and therefore our only endeavour ought to be, to render these last hours as happy as our previous ones have been."

"And to hope that we may all meet together again for a renewal of our intercourse and amusement," added Mrs. Graham, "'hope on, hope ever,' should always be the motto of the young."

"You made it your *own* motto last evening, Georgina," said her mother, then addressing her grandchildren ; "what will you say to we three old folks amusing ourselves last evening with attempting 'les bouts rimés,' after the Johnsons had left us ?"

"I hope, grandmamma, you have brought your productions for us to criticise," said the lively Julia.

"Only the one written by your mamma," said Miss Chapman, "which I have in my pocket-book ;" and she drew forth the paper, and presented it to Mrs. Maitland, requesting her to read it aloud ; it was entitled

"ADVICE TO A DESPONDING FRIEND."

"Cheer up ! 'hope on, hope ever,' cast away thy *sorrow*,
If clouds obscure to-day, they may disperse to-morrow ;
Life proffers many blessings, why off those blessings *fling* ?
Shall *man* alone be ingrate ? hark ! how the sweet birds *sing* ;
Mark with what brilliant hues the woodland scene is *glowing*,
List with what magic sound the mountain stream is *flowing*,
Why all this blush of beauty ? why tuneful stream and grove ?
"Tis nature's hymn of duty ; they praise their Maker's *love* ?"

"Never say again, mamma, that you cannot write poetry," said Mary, kissing her mother affectionately. "I shall copy those lines."

"It occurs to me," said Mrs. Maitland, "that it would be a very good way of trying this game, to choose those rhymes composing any well-known piece of poetry ; it would make one value the original more than ever, when one found how very rarely any fresh couplets exceeded them in beauty."

"To ensure fair competition, then," said her husband, "the piece selected should be unknown to those playing the game, otherwise their verses might degenerate into *bad imitations*, instead of tolerably good originals."

"We will try some evening," said his wife. Then turning to Miss Chapman, she added, "Richard was practising your new method of drawing this morning, and from the five pieces of paper I dropped on his card-board, he will make quite a capital sketch of a peasant girl carrying a basket on her head !"

"With perseverance, and talent such as Richard manifests," returned Miss Chapman, "I shall not be surprised to hear of his equalising the young man who first told me of this aid to composition. He had attained to such perfection, that he would allow you to *make* the dots or points in any position you pleased, and however oddly and difficultly arranged, you could not puzzle or defeat him, so go on," she continued, addressing Richard, "and I have little doubt but what you may obtain equal facility of design."

After tea, Susan came up, and said, "As this is to be our last happy evening at Fernwood for some time, dear aunt, we wish to perpetuate its recollection by concluding our varied amusements with the same game which commenced them. May we initiate our dear friends from the Grange in your 'pleasing paradoxes ?'"

Her aunt gave a willing assent, and the circle being formed, an introductory round was gone through in the *two* line style of—

A.

“ It is in Arrow, not in bow,
It is in hail, but not in snow,

when just as they had arrived at “W,” and Mr. Maitland was commencing the couplet,

“ It is in Writing, not in print,
It is in Wadding, not in lint,”

the door opened, and Peter announced “Mr. Barnes and Mr. Cameron.”

“ Most *apropos*,” said their host, laughing, as he shook them by the hand ; “ the very name of *lint* produced the doctor ! ”

“ You have often expressed a wish to play at mamma’s game,” said Jessie, addressing Cameron, “ and now you will have the opportunity.”

“ I shall prove but a bungler, I dare say,” he answered, “ but I will make the attempt.”

The game was then recommenced with the more elaborate paradoxes, and the majority of the party being now pretty well accustomed to versification, made but short pauses in them, and thus went the merry round ; towards the end, the more expert supplying the place of the hesitating few.

Mr. Maitland.—A

“ You can place it in an Arbour,
But not in covered bower,
In leafy shades, or gardens,
But not in tree or flower.”

Susan.—B

“ In Beauties and Belles I’ve a prominent place,
Yet lend no assistance to form or to face ;
In the Bride and the Bridegroom am equally *see* ,
But in wife or in spouse have never yet been.”

Mrs. Graham.—C

“ Though in a Corner it will perch,
 With holes and nooks it’s nought to do ;
 It precedence expects in Church,
 Yet never enters seat or pew.”

Jane.—D

“ It gives to each Daughter a portion,
 Yet never spares aught to a son ;
 It is seen in each Dance and Diversion,
 But never in frolic or fun.”

Richard.—E

“ Foremost in Evil it is shown,
 Yet shuns iniquity ;
 And though ’tis found in every one,
 Both you and I are free !”

Julia.—F

“ It is always in the Fashion,
 Yet never in the mode ;
 You may meet it in a Footpath,
 But never in the road.”

Miss Chapman.—G

“ Though first and last in Gambling,
 Ne’er seen with cards or dice ;
 Found in the midst of roguery,
 But never shares in vice.”

Mrs. Maitland.—H

“ No Home without me is complete,
 And yet with friends I never meet ;
 Get plung’d in thought, but not reflection,
 Share sympathy, but not affection.”

Jessie.—I

“ Where Influence is wanted, 'tis foremost in place,
Yet on rank or on wealth has no claim ;
It stands in a niche, like a Muse or a Grace,
But not in the Temple of Fame !”

George.—J

“ Though both in Judge and Jury seen,
In court or box it's never been,
A part of every morning Journal,
But never mix'd with things diurnal.”

Agnes.—K

“ Possessed by every Kingdom,
Yet unknown in any nation ;
Gives a portion to one's Kindred,
But shuns a near relation.”

Mrs. Beaumont.—L

“ I'm heard in Loud Laughter,
But never in mirth ;
I'm part of each Land,
But no claim on the earth.”

Cameron.—M

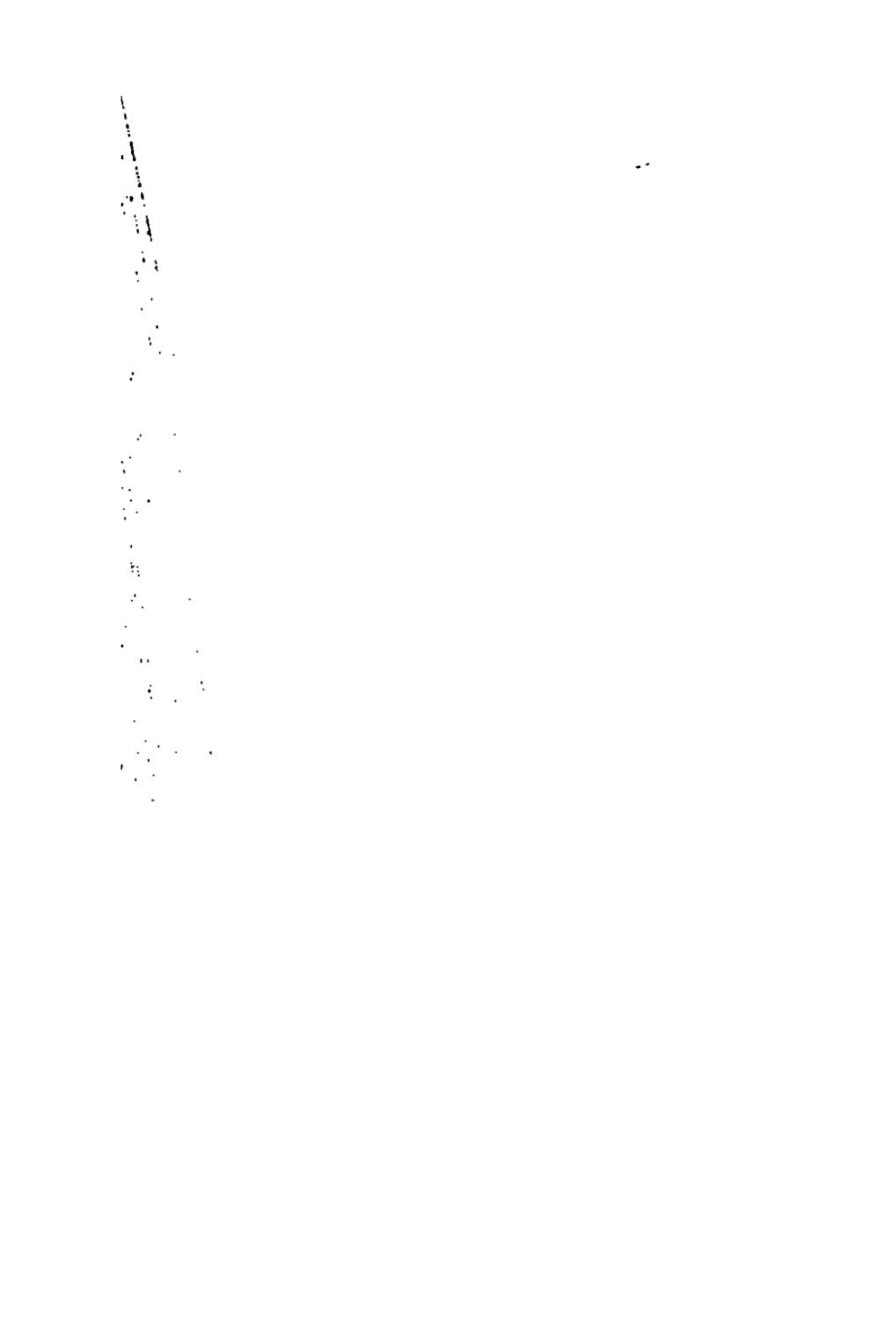
“ Foremost in every Mob,
And in midst of numbers seen ;
In rows it never mingles,
And in crowds has never been.”

Mary.—N

“ Shared in by many, yet possessed by None,
Not given to all, though part of every one.”

John.—O

“ I'm seen in every Officer,
In every soldier too,
Yet Generals, Captains, Privates, Subs,
With me have naught to do ;



Both horse and foot require me,
 In every shot I'm heard,
 Yet cavalry and infantry,
 Without me are preferred."

Tom.—P

" Although in a Passion I daily get,
 No anger have I to crush, ;
 In Pride I indulge I own, and yet,
 For conceit have not to blush."

Mr. Barnes.—Q

" 'Tis true I live in Quiet,
 But not in calm repose,
 For I'm mixed in every Quarrel,
 Though I never come to blows."

Mr. Maitland.—R

" Where Railroads are I 'go ahead,'
 Though shunning noise and fuss ;
 I get in third class carriages,
 But enter not a bus."

Susan.—S

" I'm always used in Sculptured Stone,
 Though not in monument nor tomb ;
 In Statuary I stand alone,
 Yet enter not an artist's room."

Miss Chapman.—T

" It is heard in the trumpet's Tone,
 But not in the bugle or horn ;
 It is seen in the light alone,
 But not in the day or morn."

John.—U

" Though required by each Umpire,
 When parties disagree,
 I've no claim to style or title,
 Of a special referee.

You can't buy an Umbrella
Without I give my aid,
Yet I'm never in a shower,
And ne'er get in the shade."

Mary.—V

"Though foremost in the Valiant,
In the hero has no lot;
It is seen in every Village,
But enters not a cot."

Richard.—W

"It is heard in the Wailing Wind,
But not in the tempest's roar;
It is seen in the dash of the Wave,
But not in the surge on the shore."

Mrs. Maitland.—X

"If Knox had not possess'd me,
His name had ne'er been known,
And yet no Scotch reformer
Can claim me for his own;
Though seen in all the excellent,
In goodness has no share,
It joins each one's anxiety,
And yet is free from care."

Jessie.—Y

"It is seen at the op'ning of every Year,
Yet never in spring is displayed;
Its figure in Yellow does always appear,
But ne'er is in colours array'd."

Mr. Barnes.—Z

"Tis found wherever Zig-Zags are,
But not where paths are winding;
Tis part of every sort of Zone,
Yet naught to do with binding."

When the alphabet was thus concluded, the newly initiated expressed their thanks to Mrs. Maitland for the amusement of the game, and Cameron said, "I am afraid there are few circles where it would be kept up with so much spirit as in this."

"It was John's idea to make it more elaborate," said Mrs. Maitland ; "but with the *two lines*, I think most people would get through very respectably."

Supper being soon after announced, Mr. Maitland led Mrs. Beaumont to the dining-room, where the usual cheerfulness prevailed.

"Come, John," said his uncle, when the meal was concluded, "you ought to give us one parting song ; have you nothing appropriate in your mental portfolio ?"

John considered for a few seconds, and then said, "Nothing perfectly so, but one of my own adaptations, if you will grant me your indulgence ;" he then, in very good style, sung—

"Here's to the month that's awa',
We'll drink it in strong and in sma',
And to each happy scene that we all have passed through,
In the hours of the month that's awa'.
Here's to our relatives dear,
To Beaumont, the honour'd of a',
To friends lately made, now surrounding us here,
Whose smiles cheer'd the month that's awa'.

Here's to that time-honour'd ha',
Where feasted the great and the sma',
Where plenty and wealth pour'd with generous hand,
Made pleasures of cold and of sna'.
Here's to the on-coming spring,
When again we shall meet, one and a',
May no voices be mute, whilst we cheerfully sing,
Of the joys of the month that's awa'."

John's *impromptu* was chorussed with genuine feeling, and when Mrs. Beaumont, her daughter, and

grandchildren, rose to take leave, the regret at parting was most sincere on all sides.

The last words of the kind mistress of the Grange were a pressing request for the Harpers to visit them again in the summer, which they gratefully promised to do.

FINIS.





